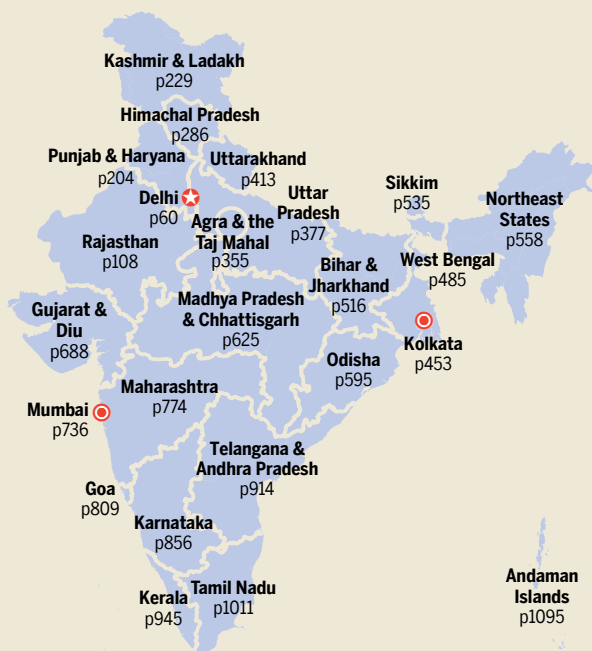




India



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PLAN YOUR TRIP

Welcome to India	6
India Map	8
India's Top 21	10
Need to Know	20
First Time India	22
What's New	24
If You Like.....	25
Month by Month.....	28
Itineraries	34
Booking Trains	39
Trekking	41
Yoga, Ayurveda & Spiritual Pursuits	43
Volunteering	46
Travel with Children....	51
Regions at a Glance....	54

ON THE ROAD

DELHI..... 60

RAJASTHAN..... 108

Jaipur	109
Bharatpur & Keoladeo National Park	130
Alwar	134
Sariska Tiger Reserve & National Park	136
Ajmer	137
Pushkar	140
Ranthambhore National Park	145
Bundi	148
Kota	152
Chittorgarh (Chittor)....	153
Udaipur	156
Mt Abu	168
Nawalgarh	173
Jhunjhunu	175
Fatehpur.....	176
Mandawa	177
Jodhpur	178
Jaisalmer	188
Bikaner.....	197

PUNJAB & HARYANA..... 204

Chandigarh..... 206

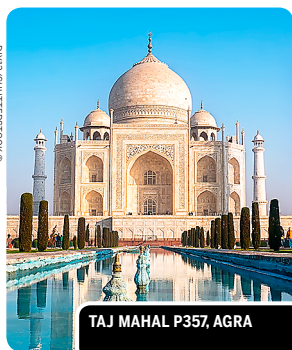
Morni Hills	213
Pinjore (Yadavindra) Gardens	214
Amritsar	214
Kapurthala.....	223
Faridkot	224
Bathinda	224
Patiala	225
Anandpur Sahib	226
Kurukshetra (Thanesar).....	227
Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary	228

KASHMIR & LADAKH..... 229

Leh	233
Markha Valley	252
Nubra Valley	254
Pangong Tso	257
Tso Moriri Loop.....	258
Leh to Kargil	259
Kargil & Zaskar.....	265
Srinagar	272
Pahalgam & Aru	279
Gulmarg.....	280
Naranag & Lake Gangabal	280
Sonamarg	281
South of Srinagar.....	282
Jammu.....	282

HIMACHAL PRADESH..... 286

Shimla	287
Rampur	296
Sarahan	297
Sangla Valley.....	298
Rekong Peo	299
Kalpa	299
Mandi	302
Rewalsar	302
Tirthan & Banjar Valleys.....	304
Bhuntar	306
Parvati Valley	306
Kullu	311
Naggar	312
Manali.....	314
Dharamsala.....	324
McLeod Ganj.....	326
Dharamsala to Mandi ..	336
Chamba Valley	338
Lahaul	344
Spiti	346



TAJ MAHAL P357, AGRA



SPICES AT A MARKET STALL

Contents

AGRA & THE TAJ MAHAL 355

Agra	356
Fatepur Sikri	372

UTTAR PRADESH..... 377

Varanasi	380
Sarnath	393
Gorakhpur	394
Kushinagar	395
Sunauli & the Nepal Border	397
Lucknow	398
Ayodhya & Around	403
Prayagraj (Allahabad) ...	405
Western Uttar Pradesh	410

UTTARAKHAND ... 413

Rishikesh	415
Haridwar	422
Rajaji Tiger Reserve	425
Dehra Dun	426
Mussoorie	429
Yamunotri	432
Uttarkashi	433
Gangotri & Gaumukh Glacier	434
Kedarnath	435
Joshimath	436
Valley of Flowers & Hem Kund	438
Badrinath & Mana Village	441
Corbett Tiger Reserve	442
Nainital	445
Almora	447
Kausani	450
Bageshwar	451
Munsyari	452

KOLKATA (CALCUTTA) 453

WEST BENGAL 485

Sundarbans Tiger Reserve	487
Up the Hooghly	488
Bishnupur	489
Shantiniketan	490
Murshidabad & Berhampore	492
Gaur & Pandua	493
Siliguri & New Jalpaiguri	494
Kurseong	497
Darjeeling	498
Singalila Ridge	508
Kalimpong	510
Jaldapara National Park	515

BIHAR & JHARKHAND 516

Patna	518
Raxaul	523
Gaya	524
Bodhgaya	525
Rajgir	529
Nalanda	531
Ranchi	532
Betla (Palamau) National Park	534

SIKKIM..... 535

Gangtok	538
Rumtek	545
Mangan	546
Dzongu	546
Far North Sikkim	547
Namchi	549
Ravangla (Rabongla)	550
Pelling	551

Khecheopalri (Kechuperi) Lake	553
Yuksom	554
Dzongri & Goecha La – the Khangchendzonga Trek	555
Tashiding	556
Kuluk & Rinchenpong ...	557

NORTHEAST STATES..... 558

Assam	560
Arunachal Pradesh ...	571
Nagaland	579
Manipur	583
Mizoram	585
Tripura	587
Meghalaya	590

ODISHA 595

Bhubaneswar	597
Puri	605
Konark	610
Chilika Lake	611
Gopalpur-on-Sea	615
Koraput	616
Rayagada	619
Jeypore	620
Cuttack	621
Dhenkanal	621
Mangarajpur	621
Pusphagiri Ruins	621
Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary	623

MADHYA PRADESH & CHHATTISGARH... 625

Gwalior	627
Orchha	632
Khajuraho	637
Panna Tiger Reserve ...	647

ON THE ROAD

Bhopal	648
Sanchi	652
Pachmarhi	657
Indore	660
Ujjain	665
Mandu	668
Maheshwar	673
Omkareshwar	674
Jabalpur	675
Kanha Tiger Reserve	678
Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve	681
Pench Tiger Reserve	682
Raipur	684
Jagdulpur	685

GUJARAT & DIU ... 688

Ahmedabad (Amdavad)	690
Vadodara (Baroda)	702
Bhavnagar	706
Velavadar Blackbuck National Park	708
Palitana	708
Diu	709
Somnath	714
Gir National Park & Wildlife Sanctuary	716
Junagadh	718
Gondal	721
Jamnagar	722
Rajkot	725
Kachchh (Kutch)	727
Bhuj	727
Little Rann of Kachchh (Kutch)	734

MUMBAI (BOMBAY) 736

MAHARASHTRA ... 774

Nashik	776
Aurangabad	780
Ellora	784
Ajanta	787
Jalgaon	790
Nagpur	790
Konkan Coast	793
Matheran	797
Lonavla	798
Pune	800
Kolhapur	806
Mahabaleshwar	807

GOA 809

Panaji	812
Old Goa	820
Mapusa	821
Candolim	822
Calangute & Baga	825
Anjuna	829
Assagao	833
Vagator & Chapora	834
Morjim	838
Asvem	839
Mandrem	840
Arambol (Harmal)	841
Margao	844
Colva	845
Benaulim	846
Agonda	847
Palolem	849
Patnem	854

KARNATAKA 856

Bengaluru (Bangalore) 858

Hesaraghatta	873
Mysuru (Mysore)	873
Bandipur National Park	885
Nagarhole National Park	886
Kodagu (Coorg) Region	887
Hassan	889
Belur	890
Halebid	891
Sravanabelagola	891
Mangaluru (Mangalore)	892
Dharmasthala	894
Udupi	894
Malpe	895
Gokarna	895
Hampi	899
Anegundi	906
Hosapete (Hospet)	907
Hubballi (Hubli)	907
Badami	907
Vijapura (Bijapur)	910
Bidar	913

TELANGANA & ANDHRA PRADESH 914

Hyderabad	916
Bhongir	934
Warangal	934
Palampet	934
Vijayawada	935
Amaravathi	937
Nagarjunakonda	937
Visakhapatnam	938
Tirumala & Tirupati	942

Contents

UNDERSTAND

KERALA 945

Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum).....	947
Kovalam.....	952
Varkala.....	957
Kollam (Quilon).....	962
Alappuzha (Alleppey).....	964
Marari & Kattoor.....	969
Kottayam.....	970
Kumarakom.....	971
Periyar Tiger Reserve.....	973
Munnar.....	978
Kochi (Cochin).....	983
Thrissur (Trichur).....	998
Kozhikode (Calicut).....	1000
Wayanad Region.....	1003
Kannur & Around.....	1006
Bekal & Around.....	1008
Lakshadweep.....	1009

TAMIL NADU 1011

Chennai (Madras).....	1013
East Coast Road.....	1031
Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram).....	1033
Kanchipuram.....	1037
Tiruvannamalai.....	1040
Puducherry (Pondicherry).....	1042
Auroville.....	1051
Chidambaram.....	1052
Tharangambadi (Tranquebar).....	1053
Kumbakonam.....	1054
Thanjavur (Tanjore).....	1056
Trichy (Tiruchirappalli).....	1060
Chettinadu.....	1064
Madurai.....	1067
Rameswaram.....	1071

Kanyakumari (Cape Comorin).....	1073
Kodaikanal (Kodai).....	1077
Coimbatore.....	1082
Coonoor.....	1084
Kotagiri.....	1085
Ooty (Udhagamandalam).....	1087
Mudumalai Tiger Reserve.....	1092
Anamalai Tiger Reserve (Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary & National Park).....	1093

ANDAMAN ISLANDS 1095

Port Blair.....	1099
Havelock Island (Swaraj Dweep).....	1104
Neil Island (Shaheed Dweep).....	1109
Middle & North Andaman.....	1112
Little Andaman.....	1114

India Today.....	1118
History.....	1121
The Way of Life.....	1138
Spiritual India.....	1145
Delicious India.....	1153
The Great Indian Bazaar.....	1163
The Arts.....	1171
Sacred Architecture.....	1176
Wildlife & Parks.....	1181
The Landscape.....	1186

SURVIVAL GUIDE

Scams.....	1190
Women & Solo Travellers.....	1192
Directory A-Z.....	1194
Transport.....	1207
Health.....	1218
Language.....	1225
Index.....	1239
Map Legend.....	1253

SPECIAL FEATURES

Red Fort in 3D.....	66
Taj Mahal in 3D.....	358
Fatehpur Sikri in 3D.....	374
Khajuraho Temples in 3D.....	638
Mysuru Palace in 3D.....	876

India: Off the Beaten Track

THE K3: KISHTWAR–KILLAR–KEYLONG

Dubbed the world's most dangerous road, the K3 teeters along terrifyingly narrow rock ledges high above the Chenab River in Jammu. (p283)

KUMBHALGARH WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

In dense forests in Rajasthan this wildlife sanctuary provides homes to antelope, gazelle, leopard, wolves and the occasional sloth bear. (p167)

MONAR METEORITE CRATER

Created 50,000 years ago this huge crater in Maharashtra has a shallow green lake at its base and wilderness all around. (p791)

DUDHSAGAR FALLS

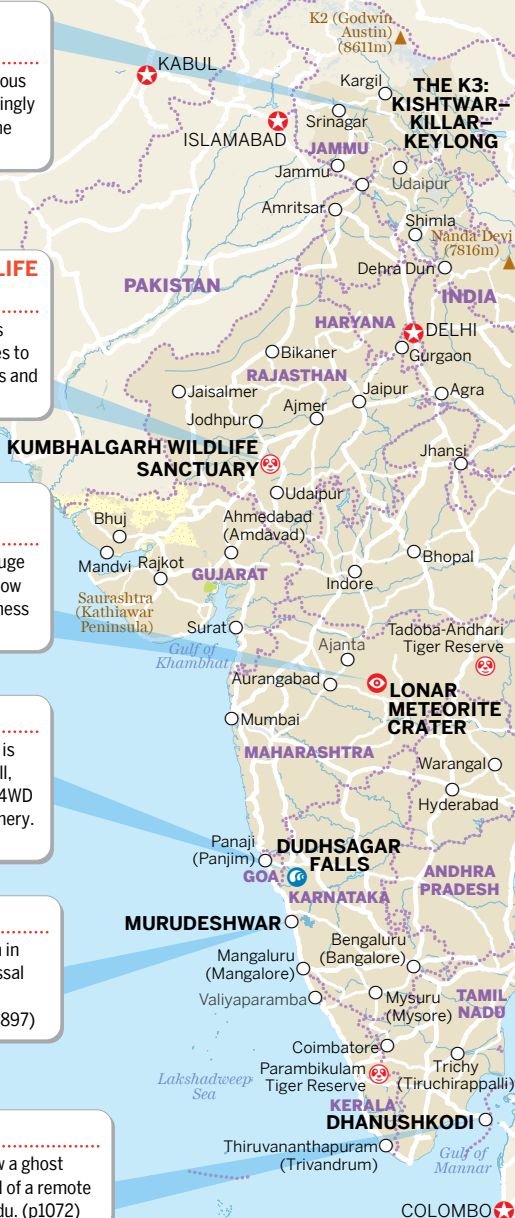
Meaning 'Sea of Milk' Dudhsagar is Goa's 300m-high, tiered waterfall, reached by a bumpy, 45-minute 4WD ride through stunning jungle scenery. (p838)

MURUDESHVAR

This beachside pilgrimage town in Karnataka is known for its colossal seashore statue of Lord Shiva overlooking the Arabian Sea. (p897)

DHANUSHKODI

Once a thriving port, now a ghost town standing at the end of a remote promontory in Tamil Nadu. (p1072)





0

0

500 miles

1,000 km

CHINA

PITHORAGARH

Remote, friendly getaway town in the hills of eastern Uttarakhand, spread above a valley dubbed 'Little Kashmir'. (p451)

External boundaries shown reflect the requirements of the government of India.

CHINA
TIBET

CHINA

Dadu

PLAN YOUR TRIP OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

**PARASNATH**

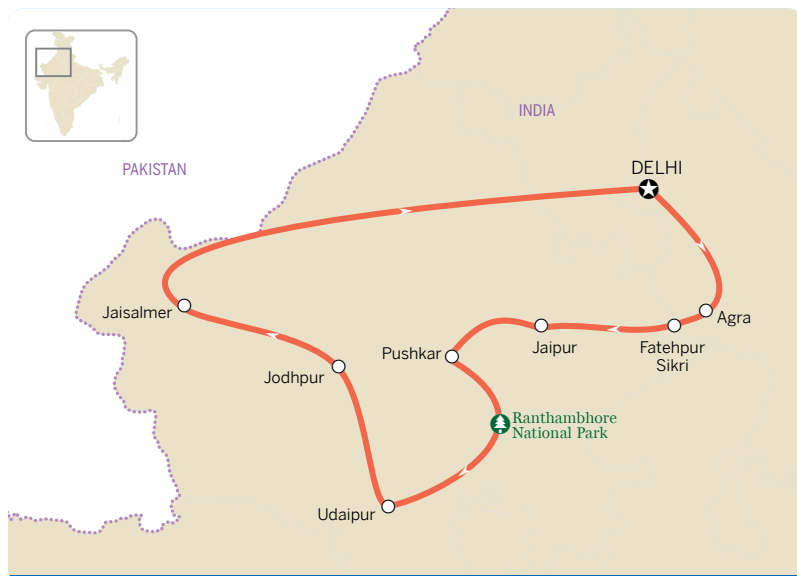
Join hundreds of Jain pilgrims who hike each morning to the Parasnath Temple at the top of Jharkhand's holy Parasnath Hill. (p533)

GUNTUPALLI

A former hilltop Buddhist cave monastery in Andhra Pradesh especially noteworthy for its caves, carvings and *chaitya-griha* (prayer hall). (p938)

SRI LANKA

Itineraries



2
WEEKS

The Golden Triangle & the Land of the Kings

Linking Delhi, Agra and Jaipur, India's Golden Triangle combines some of India's most jaw-dropping sights. The princely splendours of Rajasthan make for a natural extension.

Kick off in **Delhi**, soaking up the sights, sounds and smells of Old Delhi. Explore its Mughal-era Red Fort and Jama Masjid, and experience living Islamic culture at the captivating Hazrat Nizam-ud-din Dargah. Next, catch a train to **Agra** and gasp at the beauty of the Taj Mahal. Explore Agra Fort and devote a day to the ghost city of **Fatehpur Sikri**. Continue on to the Pink City of **Jaipur**; don't miss the City Palace, Hawa Mahal and Amber Fort.

Return to Delhi, or travel on to **Pushkar** for a few days of chilling out around lakeside temples. Drop into **Ranthambhore National Park** to spot tigers, then roll south to elegant **Udaipur**, with its floating palace and serene lake. Next, visit magnificent hilltop Kumbhalgarh and the temple at Ranakpur; en route to **Jodhpur**; Mehrangarh fort offers the definitive view over Rajasthan's Brahmin-blue city.

Enjoy a camel trek through the dunes in fortified **Jaisalmer** before looping back to Delhi for an early-morning trip to the ruins of Qutab Minar.



6 MONTHS

North & South

Tourist visas last six months, allowing you to mix famous highlights with detours off the established tourist grid.

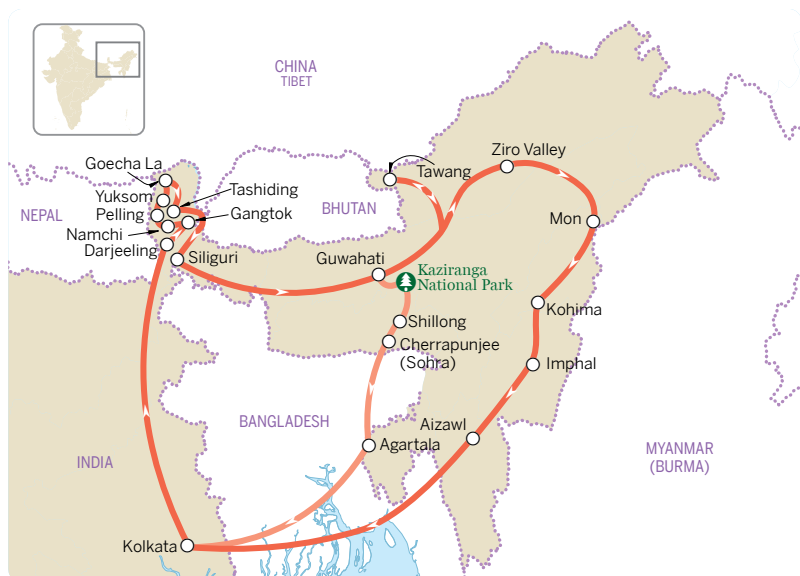
Start by exploring **Delhi**, then ride the rails north to **Amritsar** to see Sikhism's glittering Golden Temple. Connect through Chandigarh to lofty **Shimla**; from this classic hill station you can roam northwest to **Dharamsala**, home of the Dalai Lama, before doubling back to adrenalin-charged **Manali**, starting point for the thrilling overland journey to rugged **Ladakh** (June to September). When you've had your fill of mountain air, head south for some yoga in **Rishikesh**, and descend to **Agra** to admire the vision-like Taj Mahal. Next, go south to **Khajuraho**, with its risqué temples, and scan the jungle for tigers in **Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve**. Continue to **Varanasi** for a mesmerising boat trip along the sacred Ganges.

Roam east to **Kolkata**, bustling capital of West Bengal. Swing north as far as **Darjeeling** or **Sikkim** for sweeping Himalayan views, then drift down the coast to the temple towns of **Konark** and **Puri** in Odisha (Orissa). Continue south to **Chennai** for a big-city view of South India.

From Chennai, detour south to the temple wonders of **Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram)**, continuing to French-colonial **Puducherry (Pondicherry)**. Rumble on to **Madurai**, with its deity-encrusted temple towers. Enjoy some beach time in **Kerala** before roaming inland to nostalgic **Mysuru (Mysore)** to see how maharajas lived.

Continuing north, head to **Hampi**, where collapsed temples lie strewn among the boulders, then unwind on the sun-stroked coast of **Goa**. Wine, fine-dine and go Bollywood-crazy in **Mumbai**, then admire the glorious cave paintings and carvings at **Ajanta** and **Ellora**.

Finish with Rajasthan's triumvirate of coloured cities – pink **Jaipur**, blue **Jodhpur** and white **Udaipur**. There might just be time to detour to the fascinating temples and nature reserves of **Gujarat** before you take one last train ride to Delhi.



Mountains & Tribal Culture

Sikkim and the Northeast States, with their incredible mountain scenery, are still a well-kept secret for many travellers, but plan ahead as permits and security can be an issue.

Starting in **Kolkata**, make your first stop genteel **Darjeeling** – here you can sample the subcontinent's finest teas and pick up a permit for Sikkim, one of the most serene retreats in the country. Rumble by jeep to **Gangtok**, the Sikkimese capital, for trips to historic Buddhist monasteries and views over epic mountain scenery. Roll on to **Namchi** to see giant statues of Shiva and Padmasambhava, and to **Pelling** for inspiring views of the white-peaked Khangchendzonga and the beautiful Pemayangtse Gumpa. Take the weeklong trek from **Yukuksom** to **Goecha La**, a 4940m pass with incredible views, then exit Sikkim via **Tashiding**, with more wonderful views and another stunning monastery, before you travel to **Siliguri** for the train journey east.

Arrange tours and permits for the Northeast States in **Guwahati** or online. Then head from Guwahati to Arunachal Pradesh to admire the stunning, city-size Buddhist monastery at **Tawang**, before exploring the fascinating tribal villages around the **Ziro Valley**. A visit to Nagaland opens up fascinating tribal villages around **Mon**, dotted with traditional longhouses and squeezed into remote forested valleys, and the capital, **Kohima**, with its moving WWII relics. Going south, you can encounter Meitei culture in newly accessible **Imphal** in Manipur and Mizo culture in **Aizawl** in Mizoram before you fly back to Kolkata.

As an alternative, you could try this classic loop (for which Arunachal Pradesh permits are not required): from Guwahati, head to **Kaziranga National Park** to spot rare rhinos. Detour to sleepy **Shillong**, and hike to the waterfalls and incredible living root bridges of **Cherrapunjee (Sohra)**. Take the long overland road trip to **Agartala**, dusty capital of Tripura, before you return to Kolkata by air or overland through Bangladesh.

3
WEEKS

The Spiritual Centre

India has a wealth of temples, and this trip around the central plains takes in some of the most fabulous.

Start amid the chaos and culture of **Kolkata**, then swap the big-city bustle for the peace of **Bodhgaya**, where the historical Buddha attained enlightenment. Roll across the plains to **Sarnath**, where Buddha later gave his first dharma lesson.

Move on to one of Hinduism's most sacred spots, ancient **Varanasi**, then swap living history for ancient erotica at the Hindu temples of **Khajuraho**. Next, head southwest to **Sanchi**, where Emperor Ashoka first embraced Buddhism, and zip on through Bhopal to the caves of **Ajanta**, filled with timeless Buddhist carvings.

In Rajasthan, stop off in whimsical **Udaipur**, with its lakes and palaces, then explore the milky-marble Jain temples of **Ranakpur** or **Mt Abu**. Continue to **Pushkar**, coiled around its sacred lake, and trip out to nearby **Ajmer**, one of India's key Islamic pilgrimage sites. Swing through atmospheric **Jaipur** to end the trip in **Delhi**, with its magnificent Mughal ruins.

4
WEEKS

Himalayan Adventures

The heart-stopping Himalayan views on this mountainous loop will stay with you forever.

Ride the rails from **Delhi** to **Kalka**, to board the narrow-gauge train to colonial-era **Shimla**. Start your mountain exploration with some gentle rambles, then roll north to the **Kullu Valley**, India's adventure sport capital.

From the hill resort of **Manali**, embark on the epic two-day journey to **Leh** in mountainous Ladakh (July to September), to hike to precariously poised Buddhist monasteries, then roll west to Kashmir (checking first that it's safe to travel) and stay on a **Srinagar** houseboat. Next, loop south to elegant **Dalhousie**, and soak up Buddhist culture in nearby **Dharamsala**, before returning to Delhi.

To mix things up, consider heading southeast from Leh into the dramatic **Spiti Valley**, with its own collection of centuries-old monasteries. Ride the rattletrap bus to vertiginous **Kinnaur**, and make stops in **Dehra Dun** and **Rishikesh** to brush up on your yoga, before closing the loop in Delhi.



2 WEEKS Beaches & Southern Cities

This laid-back meander takes in some of India's finest coastal retreats.

Start in **Mumbai** and people-watch, amble and feast, then take a boat trip to the temples on Elephanta Island, before travelling south by train to beach-blessed Goa.

Take your pick from tropical sands at **Arambol (Harmal)**, **Vagator** and **Palolem**, then continue along the coast to the sacred town of **Gokarna**. For a change of pace, detour inland to **Hampi**, with its serene Vijayanagar ruins, and more magnificent stone carving at **Belur** and **Halebid**. Return by train to **Mangaluru (Mangalore)** to gorge on spectacular seafood, then chug south to lovely, laid-back **Kochi (Cochin)**.

Cruise Kerala's languorous backwaters from **Alappuzha (Alleppey)**, before dipping your toes in the warm waters around **Varkala** and **Kovalam**. End the journey south at cultured **Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum)**, then fly to historic **Hyderabad** for a taste of Islamic India, before one last train ride back to Mumbai.



3 WEEKS A Southern Loop

Chennai, the fast-changing capital of the south, is the easiest starting point for exploring India's southern tip.

Kick off with some fiery thalis in **Chennai**, then drift south to admire the elaborate temple carvings in **Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram)**.

Amble around French-flavoured **Puducherry (Pondicherry)**, before leaving the coast behind for the temple towns of Tamil Nadu. Essential stops include boulder-covered **Trichy (Tiruchirappalli)** and **Madurai**, with its soaring, deity-covered towers. From here, zip down to **Kanyakumari (Cape Comorin)**, India's southernmost point.

Next, kick back on the sand at beach-tastic **Kovalam** or **Varkala**, then trade the palms for jungle vines and wild elephants in steamy **Periyar Tiger Reserve**. Allow time for a trip to **Munnar**, for tranquil rambles through tea plantations.

Heading north, visit colourful **Mysuru (Mysore)**, with its flamboyant maharaja's palace, and stop in at cosmopolitan **Bengaluru (Bangalore)** to sample its craft beers before looping back to Chennai.

Behind the Scenes

SEND US YOUR FEEDBACK

We love to hear from travellers – your comments keep us on our toes and help make our books better. Our well-travelled team reads every word on what you loved or loathed about this book. Although we cannot reply individually to your submissions, we always guarantee that your feedback goes straight to the appropriate authors, in time for the next edition. Each person who sends us information is thanked in the next edition – the most useful submissions are rewarded with a selection of digital PDF chapters.

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OUR READERS

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Index

A

A Suitable Boy 407

Aalo 577

accessible travel 1194

accommodation 22, 1194-6,
see also *individual*
locations

children, travel with 53
costs 779, 936

heritage homestays
24, 969

hostels 24

language 1226, 1229

accommodation costs 1194-5

Agra 366

Amritsar 222

Andaman Islands 1103

Andhra Pradesh 936

Bihar & Jharkhand 522

Chhattisgarh 635

Delhi 96

Goa 816

Gujarat 709

Haryana 222

Himachal Pradesh 287

Jaipur 119

Kashmir 257

Kerala 959

Kolkata 469

Ladakh 257

Madhya Pradesh 635

Mumbai 749

Northeast States 567

Odisha 608

Punjab 222

Rajasthan 119

Sikkim 549

Tamil Nadu 1036

Telangana 936

Uttar Pradesh 400

Uttarakhand 419

West Bengal 494

activities 28-31

Adinath 709

Adivasis 686, 1142-3, see
also *tribal peoples*

Agartala 587-9, **588**

Agonda 847-9

Agra 55, 355-76, **356, 361**

accommodation 355,
364-7

accommodation costs
365

activities 364

climate 355

drinking & nightlife 369

festivals & events 363

food 355, 367-9

history 356

safe travel 370

shopping 369

sights 356-64

tourist information 370-1

tours 364

travel to/from 371-2

travel within 372

Ahmedabad 690-700, **692-3**

accommodation 695-7

festivals & events 695

food 697-8

shopping 698

sights 691-4

tourist information 699

tours 694

travel to/from 699

travel within 699-700

Aihole 909-10

air travel 1207-8

airlines 104, 1210

airports 104, 1207-8

Aizawl 586-7

Ajanta Caves 12, 787-90,
788, 12

Ajmer 137-40, **138**

Alappuzha 964-9, **966**

Alchi 262-3

Allahabad, see *Prayagraj*

Alleppey, see *Alappuzha*

Almora 447-9

altitude sickness 1223

Alwar 134-6

Amaravathi 937

Amarnathji Yatra 281

Amber 129-30

Amdavad, see *Ahmedabad*

Amritsar 16, 24, 214-22, **16**

Anandpur Sahib 226-7

Andaman Islands 24, 58,

1095-11, **1096**

accommodation 1095

accommodation costs

1103

beaches 1095

cell phones 1099

climate 1095, 1097

environment 1097

geography 1097

highlights 1096

history 1097

internet access 1099

mobile phones 1099

North Andaman 1112-14

Restricted Area Permit

1097-8

safe travel 1097

telephone services 1099

travel to/from 1098

travel within 1098-9

tribal peoples 1115-16

Andaman Trunk Road 1112

Andamanese 1115-16

Andhra Pradesh 57, 935-44,

915

accommodation 914

accommodation costs
936

climate 914

festivals & events 916

food 914

highlights 915

history 916

Anegundi 906-7, **904**

animals, see *individual*
animals

Anjuna 829-33, **829**

Araku Valley 941-2

Arambol 841-3

architecture 14, 478, 1066,

1125, 1176-80, **14**, see
also *individual buildings*

colonial-era 875, 1130

Deccan Sultanates 1125

area codes 21

art galleries

David Hall 984

Kalakriti Art Gallery

919-20

Kashi Art Gallery 984

Mario Gallery 813

Museum of Goa 825

Tara Books 1015

arts 1163-70, 1171-5

bell-metal craftwork 686

Bidri 1165

carpet-making 1163-4

folk art 1166-7

Kachchh handicrafts

732-3

leatherwork 1165

metalwork 1165

miniature paintings 152,
1166

murals 152

patachitra 610

rangolis 1174

Saora art 610

talpatra 610

Tibetan arts 334

woodcarving 1169

wool shawls 313, 1167

Aru 279-80

Arunachal Pradesh 571-9

ashrams 44

Anasakti Ashram 450

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

Ashram 417

Matha Amrithanandamay

Mission 964

Osho International

Meditation Resort

801, 804

Map Pages **000**

Photo Pages **000**

ashrams *continued*
 Sabarmati Ashram 691
 Sivagiri Mutt 957-8
 Sivananda Yoga Vedanta
 Dhanwantari Ashram
 952
 Sri Aurobindo Ashram
 1042-3
 Sri Ramana Ashram
 1040
 Surfing Ashram 895
 Swarg Ashram 417
 Vivekanandapuram 1074
 Asiatic lions 716, 717
 Assagao 833-4
 Assam 560-71
 Asven 839-40
 ATMs 1200
 Aurangabad 780-4, **781**
 Auroville 1051-2
 autorickshaws 1213
 Avalanche Valley 1091
 Awantipora 282
 Ayodhya 403-5
 ayurveda 27, 44-5, 977

B
 Babur 1127
 backwaters 972-3, 1008
 Badami 907-9
 Baga 825-9, **826**
 Bageshwar 451-2
 Bahu 304
 Bajrang Dal 597
 Bandel 489
 Bandhavgarh National Park
 681-2, **13**
 Bandipur National Park
 885-6
 Bangalore, *see* Bengaluru
 Banjar Valley 304-6
 Bansberia 489
 bargaining 23, 1168
 Barkul 615
 Baroda 702-5, **703**
 Barshani 310-11
 Basgo 260-1
 basilicas, *see* churches &
 cathedrals
 Bathinda 224-5
 Bavikonda 941
 beaches 15, 26-7, **15, 818**
 bears 1182, 1183
 Beatles, the 415, 417

Bekal 1009-10
 Belur 890-1
 Benaulim 846-7
 Bengaluru 858-73, **860-1**
 accommodation 864-5
 activities 863
 drinking & nightlife
 868-9
 entertainment 870-1
 festivals & events 864
 food 865-8
 history 859
 shopping 871
 sights 859-63
 tourist information 871-2
 tours 863
 travel to/from 872, 873
 travel within 872-3
 Berhampore 492-3
 Bhagsu 333-5
 Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh
 801, 804
 bhang 188, 1203
 Bharatpur 130-4, **132**
 Bharmour 342-3
 Bhavnagar 706-8, **708**
 Bheemunipatnam 940
 Bhimbetka 652
 Bhitarkanika Wildlife
 Sanctuary 623-4
 Bhojpur 652
 Bhongir 934
 Bhopal 648-52, **649**
 Bhubaneswar 597-605,
598
 Bhuj 727-30, **728**
 Bhujodi 732
 Bhuntar 306
 bicycle hire 1210-11
 Bidar 913
 Bihar 56, 518-32, **517**
 accommodation 516
 accommodation costs
 522
 climate 516
 festivals & events 519
 food 516
 highlights 517
 history 518
 safe travel 531
 water 529
 Bijapur, *see* Vijapura
 Bikaner 197-202, **198-9**
 bike travel 1210-11
 Billing 337-8
 Binsar 450
 Bir 337-8
 birds 1184

bird-watching
 Bhitarkanika Wildlife
 Sanctuary 623
 Binsar Wildlife
 Sanctuary 450
 Centre for Desert &
 Ocean 732
 Chilika Lake 611-15
 Corbett Tiger Reserve
 442
 Dandeli 908
 Debrigarh Wildlife
 Sanctuary 624
 Fudam Bird Sanctuary
 712
 Great Himalayan
 National Park 305
 Hampi 902
 Keoladeo National
 Park 131
 Khijadiya Bird
 Sanctuary 725
 Mt Abu 171
 Nalsarovar Bird
 Sanctuary 701
 Nameri National Park
 565
 Pobitora Wildlife
 Sanctuary 564
 Rajaji Tiger Reserve 425
 Ranganathittu Bird
 Sanctuary 885
 Sultanpur Bird
 Sanctuary 228
 Tirthan Valley 304
 Thattekad Bird
 Sanctuary 982
 Vedanthangal Bird
 Sanctuary 1035
 Wild Ass Sanctuary 734
 Ziro Valley 576
 Bishnoi villages 187
 Bishnupur 489-90
 black market 1201
 Blue Mountains 1080
 boat travel 24, 1210, 1211,
 1213
 boat trips
 Alappuzha 965
 Assam 562
 Diu 712
 Ganges 380, 488
 Kerala backwaters 13,
 972-3, 1008, **13**
 Kollam 962
 Mumbai-Goa 1211
 Periyar Tiger Reserve 974
 Bodhgaya 525-9, **526**
 Bollywood 767, 1174
 Bombay, *see* Mumbai
 Bomedila 571-2

booking trains 39-40
 books
 cinema 1174, 1175
 dance 1171
 fiction 1118
 food 473, 1153, 1154,
 1156, 1157, 1160
 history 1126, 1128, 1131,
 1132
 religion 1122, 1145, 1149
 textiles 1168
 visual arts 1173
 wildlife 1185
 border crossings
 India-Bangladesh 1208
 India-Bangladesh
 (Agartala) 589
 India-Bangladesh
 (Siliguri) 496
 India-Bhutan 1208-9
 India-Bhutan (Siliguri)
 496
 India-Myanmar 1209
 India-Myanmar (Moreh)
 586
 India-Myanmar
 (Zokhawthar) 586
 India-Nepal 1209
 India-Nepal (Banbassa)
 449
 India-Nepal (Panitanki)
 506
 India-Nepal (Raxual) 524
 India-Nepal (Siliguri)
 496
 India-Nepal (Sunauli)
 397
 India-Pakistan 1209-10
 India-Pakistan
 (Attari-Wagah) 222
 Buddha 395, 396, 522, 523,
 545, 546, 528, 530, 1123
 Buddhism 1150-1
 Buddhist architecture 1178
 Buddhist circuit 1150
 Buddhist temples 25
 Ajanta Caves 12,
 787-90, **788, 12**
 Amaravathi 937
 Chetiayagiri Vihara 656
 Chukchikjal Temple 270
 Ellora Caves 784-7
 Global Vipassana Pagoda
 743
 Golden Temple 890-1
 Indosan Nipponji Temple
 526
 Mahabodhi Temple 525
 Mahaparinirvana Temple
 396
 Mathakuar Temple 396

- Mulgandha Kuti Vihar 394
 Sanchi 655, **1180**
 Thai Temple & Monastery 393
 Tsuglagkhang Complex 326
 Tsuklakhang 539
 Zangdogpalri Temple 890-1
- budgeting 21, *see also* accommodation costs, costs
 buffalo racing 896
 Bundi 148-52, **149**
 bus travel 1006, 1213
 business hours 21, 1201-2
 Bylakuppe 890
- C**
 Calangute 825-9, **826**
 Calcutta, *see* Kolkata
 Calicut, *see* Kozhikode
 Candolim 822-5, **824**
 cannabis 188, 306, 384, 1199, 1203
 Cape Comorin, *see* Kanyakumari
 car travel 1211-13
 car-sharing services 24
 Delhi 107
 Goa 811
 Jaipur 128
 Kolkata 484
 Mumbai 772
 carpets 1163-4
 caste system 1139-14
 cathedrals, *see* churches & cathedrals
 caves
 Ajanta Caves 12, 787-90, **788, 12**
 Aurangabad Caves 782
 Badami 908-9
 Baratang caves 1112
 Bhaja Caves 800
 Borra Caves 941
 Buddhist caves, Ellora 786-7
 Edakkal Caves 1004
 Ellora Caves 784-7, **786**
 Guntupalli 938
 Jain caves, Ellora 787
 Kanheri Caves 769
 Karla Caves 800
 Kutumsar Cave 687
 Lenyadri 806
 Saspol 262
 Undavalli Cave Temples 935
- cell phones 20, 1099, 1204
chaat galli 368
 chai 1160
 Chamba 340-42, **341**
 Chamba Valley 338-43
 Champaner 705-6
 Chandannagar 489
 Chandigarh 206-13, **208-9**
 Chapora 834-8, **836**
 charas 306
 Chemrey 251-2
 Chennai 1013-31, **1016-17, 1022-3**
 accommodation 1020-3
 activities 1019
 courses 1019
 drinking & nightlife 1026-7
 entertainment 1027
 food 1023-6
 history 1014
 shopping 1027-8
 sights 1014-15, 1018-19, 1020
 tourist information 1028-9
 tours 1019-20
 travel to/from 1029
 travel within 1030-1
 Chennamangalam 997-8
 Cherrapunjee 593-4
 Chettinadu 1064-7
 Chhattisgarh 56, 684-7, **626**
 accommodation 625
 accommodation costs 635
 climate 625
 costs 635
 festivals & events 627
 food 625
 highlights 626
 history 627
 Chidambaram 1052-3
 Chidiya Tapu 1104
 children, travel with 51-3, 766
 China, relations with 1126
 Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary 983
 Chishti, Khwaja Muin-ud-din 137-8
 Chitkul 298-9
 Chitrakut 405
 Chittorgarh (Chittor) 153-6, **154**
 Chola temples 1055
 Christianity 573, 1151-2
 churches & cathedrals
 Armenian Church of Nazareth 460
- Bandel Basilica 489
 Basilica de Bom Jesus 820
 Basilica of Our Lady of Dolours 998
 Chennai 1020
 Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception 812, **818-19**
 Church of South India 1000
 Church of St Cajetan 821-2
 Church of St Francis of Assisi (Diu) 710
 Church of St Francis of Assisi (Old Goa) 821
 CSI Christ Church 978
 Holy Rosary Cathedral 460
 Lourdes Church 1062
 Marth Mariam Church 998
 New Jerusalem Church 1053
 Our Lady of Immaculate Conception Cathedral 1044
 Our Lady of Lourdes Cathedral 998
 Puducherry 1044
 Sacred Heart Basilica 1044
 San Thome Cathedral 1015
 Santa Cruz Basilica 984
 Sé Cathedral 820
 Solomon's Temple 586
 St Aloysius College Chapel 893
 St Francis Church 983
 St John's Church (Kolkata) 460
 St John's Church (Trichy) 1062
 St Mary's Cathedral 1069
 St Mary's Orthodox Church 970
 St Mary's Syrian Knanaya Church 970
 St Paul's Cathedral 456
 St Paul's Church 710
 St Stephen's Church 1087
 St Teresa's Church 743
 St Thomas' Cathedral 742
 St Thomas' Church 1087
- cinema 767, 1118, 1133, 1174-5
 Cinque Island 1104
 climate 20, 28-31, 42
 climate change 1207
- clothing 1141
 Cochín, *see* Kochi
 Coimbatore 1082-4, **1083**
 Colva 845-6
 consulates 1196-8
 cooking classes 1158
 Assagao 833
 Delhi 79-81
 Jaipur 117
 Kochi 985
 Kolkata 465
 Munnar 979
 Palolem 849-50
 Periyar Tiger Reserve 974
 Pushkar 141
 Udaipur 160
 Vagator 835
 Coonoor 1084-5
 Coorg region, *see* Kodagu region
 Corbett Tiger Reserve 442-5
 costs 21, *see also* accommodation costs
 bus 1212
 car 1212
 food 1196
 healthcare 1220
 train 1216, 1217
 Covelong, *see* Kovalam (Tamil Nadu)
 Craggy Island 1113
 credit cards 1190, 1200-1
 culture 1138-14
 currency 20, 1200
 customs regulations 1196, 1199
 Cuttack 621
 cycle-rickshaws 1213
 cycling 1210-11
- D**
dabba-wallahs 761
 Dalai Lama 326, 331, 332
 Dalhousie 338-40, **339**
 Daman 706
 Dandeli 908
 dangers, *see* safe travel
 Darjeeling 498-508, **500**
 debit cards 1200-1
 Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary 624
 Dehra Dun 426-9, **426**
 Delhi 17, 54, 60-107, **62-3, 68-9, 72-3, 80-1, 84, 88-9, 17**
 accommodation 60, 82-7
 accommodation costs 96
 activities 79-81

Delhi continued
 climate 60
 courses 79-81
 drinking & nightlife 96-9
 entertainment 99
 festivals & events 61
 food 60, 87-96
 food costs 96
 highlights 62-3
 history 61
 safe travel 102-3
 shopping 99-102
 sights 64-79
 tourist information 103-4
 tours 81-2
 travel to/from 104-6
 travel within 106-7
 demographics 1119
 departure tax 1208
 Desert National Park 197
 Dha Hanu 256
 Dhankar 352
 Dhanushkodi 1072
 Dharamkot 333-5
 Dharamsala 324-6, **325**
 Dharavi Slum 748
 Dharmasthala 894
 Dhenkanal 621
*dhow*s 731
 Dibrugarh 570-1
 Diglipur 1113-14
 Dimapur 579
 Dirang 572
 disabilities, travellers
 with 1194
 Diskit 254-5
 Diu 57, 709-14, **711**
 Diwali 28, 31, 61
 Donyi-Polo religion 573
 drinks 1159-60
 beer 24, 762
 bhāng lassis 1203
 lassis 389
 scams 1190
 whisky 874
 wine 778, 874, 1160
 driving 1211-13
 driving licences 1214
 drugs 1190, 1199, 1203
 Dussehra 31, 61, 301,
 311, 879
 Dzongu 546-7
 Dzūkou Valley 581

E
 electricity 1196
 elephants 1181
 Andaman Islands 1108
 Betla (Palamau) National
 Park 534
 Corbett Tiger Reserve 442
 Jaldapara National
 Park 515
 Kaziranga National
 Park 566
 Manas National Park 564
 Rajaji Tiger Reserve 425
 Ellora Caves 784-7, **786**
 embassies 1196-8
 emergencies 21, 1228,
 1230, *see also* safe
 travel
 endangered species 1183
 environmental issues
 endangered species 1183
 boat trips 973
 Kerala backwaters 973
 volunteering 48
 Eravikulam National Park
 983
 Ernakulam, *see* Kochi
 etiquette 23, 787, 1120, 1149
 events, *see* festivals &
 events
 Excelsior Island 1113
 exchange rates 21
 exports 1199

F
 Faridkot 224
 Fatehpur 176-7
 Fatehpur Sikri 372-6, **374-5**
 festivals & events 28-31,
 see also individual
 locations
 films 767, 1118, 1133, 1174-5
 five pillars of Islam 1149
 floating islands 585
 food 23, 1153-16, **2**, *see*
 also individual locations
 Bengal 473
 bread 1154
 Chennai street food 1026
 children, travel with 53
 costs 96, 1198
 dabba-wallahs 761
 Delhi street food 92
 glossary 1160-2
 Gujarat 707
 health 1222
 Hyderabad 926
 Kashmiri 280
 kebabs 401
 language 1226-7, 1229-30

Mumbai street food 758
 Odisha 602
 Parsi cafes 755
 Punjab 226
 scams 1190
 Sikkim 543
 Tibet 243
 tongba 547
 Uttar Pradesh 401
 forts 25
 Agra Fort 360-3
 Amber Fort 129
 Anandpur Sahib Fort 227
 Bala Quila 135
 Bekal Fort 1009
 Bhadra Fort 692
 Bidar Fort 913
 Chalukyan hill fort 934
 Chandragiri Fort 944
 Chapora Fort 834
 Chehni Kothi 304
 Chittorgarh (Chittor)
 153-6
 Citadel (Vijapura) 910-11
 Dansborg fort 1053-4
 Daulatabad Fort 784
 Diu Fort 710
 Fort Aguada 822
 Fort St Angelo 1007
 Fort St George 1019
 Gingee Fort 1041
 Golconda Fort 920-1
 Govindgarh 224
 Gwalior Fort 629-30
 Hari Parbat Fort 274-5
 Jaigarh 129-30
 Jaisalmer Fort 188, **14**
 Janjira Fort 793-4
 Junagarh 198-9
 Kamru Fort 298
 Kangla Fort 584
 Kangra Fort 335
 Kankwari Fort 136
 Kondapalli Fort 935
 Kumbhalgarh 166
 Lohagarh 130-1
 Mehrangarh 179, **18**
 Naggar Castle 312
 Nahargarh 116
 Pratapgarh Fort 808
 Purana Qila 76
 Qila Mubarak (Faridkot)
 224
 Qila Mubarak (Patiala)
 225
 Raigad Fort 794-5
 Ranthambhore Fort
 145-7
 Red Fort 64-7, **66-7**

Shaniwar Wada 801
 Shivneri Fort 806
 Sindhudurg Fort 796
 Sinhadgad 805-6
 Siri Fort 75-6
 Taragarh 149
 Tsemo Fort 235
 Tughlaqabad 79
 Uparkot Fort 720
 Warangal Fort 934
 Fudam 712
G
 Galgibag 854
 Gandhi, Indira 75, 1137
 Gandhi, Mahatma 450,
 690, 691, 695, 706, 725,
 726, 738, 1133-4, 1166
 Gandhi Memorial
 Museum 1068
 Gandhi Museum 72-3
 Gandhi National
 Memorial 800
 National Gandhi
 Museum 74
 Raj Ghat memorial 73-4
 Gandhinagar 700
 Ganesh Chaturthi 28, 30
 Ganges 415, 422
 boat trips 380, 488
 Ganges Delta 487-94
 Sangam 405-7
 Gangetic dolphins 487
 Gangotri 434-5
 Gangtok 538-45, **540**
 Ganpatipule 795-6
 gardens, *see* parks &
 gardens
 Garhwal 418
 Garhwali Himalaya 433
 Gaumukh Glacier 434
 Gaur 493-4
 Gaya 524-5
 gay travellers 765, 1144,
 1199-200
 gems 125, 1191
 gender equality
 1118-19
 ghats
 Chitrakut 405
 Haridwar 422
 Mathura 410
 Maheshwar 673
 Mumbai 743
 Nashik 776
 Pushkar 141
 Rishikesh 415
 Ujjain 666
 Varanasi 381-4

Ghum 508
 Goa 15, 57, 809-55, **810, 15**
 accommodation 809
 accommodation costs 816
 Central Goa 812-21
 climate 809
 festivals & events 812
 food 809
 highlights 810
 history 811
 North Goa 821-43
 safe travel 833
 South Goa 844-55
 tourist information 811
 travel to/from 811
 travel within 811-12
 Gokarna 895-9
 Golconda Fort 920-1
 Golden Temple 16, 1178-9,
 16, 1178-9
 gompas 1152
 Gondal 721-2
 Gopalpur-on-Sea 615-16
 Gorakhpur 394-5
 Gorkhaland 499
 Gorkhas 499
 Goudaguda 619
 Guda Bishnoi 187
 Gujarat 57, 688-735, **689**
 accommodation 688
 accommodation costs 709
 climate 688
 eastern Gujarat 690-706
 festivals & events 690
 food 688
 highlights 689
 history 690
 Kachchh 727-35
 Saurashtra 706-27
 Gulabgarh 283
 Gulmarg 280
 Guntupalli 938
 Guwahati 560-3, **561**
 Gwalior 627-32, **628**

H

Halebid 891
 Hampi 10, 899-906, **902, 904, 11**
 Hare Krishnas 411-12
 Haridwar 422-5, **423**
 Harmal, see Arambol
 Haryana 54, 227-8, **205**
 accommodation 204
 accommodation costs 222
 climate 204
 festivals & events 213
 food 204
 highlights 205
 Hassan 889-90
 Havelock Island, see Swaraj
 Dweep
 headhunting 582
 health 1218-24
 altitude sickness 233
 carbon monoxide poisoning 1224
 children, travel with 53
 environmental hazards 1222-4
 food 1222
 heat 1222-3
 insurance 1218
 medicines 1219
 mosquitoes 597
 water 529, 1221
 healthcare 1220
 Hem Kund 438-40
 Hemis 249-51
 heritage hotels 1195
 Hesaraghatta 873
hijras 1143
 Hikkim 350-1
 hill stations 13, 26, **13, 19**, see also *individual locations*
 Himachal Pradesh 55, 286-354, **288-9**
 accommodation 286
 accommodation costs 287
 Central Himachal Pradesh 301-24
 climate 286
 festivals & events 301
 food 286
 history 287
 Kinnaur 296-301
 Lahaul 343-54
 Southern Himachal Pradesh 287-96
 Spiti 343-54
 Western Himachal Pradesh 324-43
 Himalayas 433
 Hindi language 1225-9
 Hindu architecture 1176-7
 Hindu deities 1145-6
 Hindu temples 605
 1000-Pillared Temple 934
 Achyutaraya Temple 901
 Ahom temples 569
 Akshardham (Delhi) 78
 Akshardham (Gandhinagar) 700

Arunachaleswar Temple 1040
 Ayyappan Temple 978
 Badrinath Temple 441
 Bagnath Temple 451
 Baijnath Temple 337
 Bala Hanuman Temple 723
 Bhadrakali Temple 934
 Bhima Devi Temple 214
 Bijamandala Temple 644
 Bijli Mahadev Temple 311-12
 Birla Mandir (Hyderabad) 919
 Birla Mandir (Kolkata) 464
 Brahma Temple (Khajuraho) 643
 Brahma Temple (Pushkar) 141
 Brahmani Mata Temple 343
 Brajeshwari Devi Temple 336
 Brihadishwara Temple 1057
 Chandi Devi Temple 422
 Channakeshava Temple 891
 Chaturbhuj Temple 633
 Chaturbhuj Temple 644
 Chausath Yogini 605
 Chausath Yogini Temple 643
 Chitragupta Temple 642
 Choskhor Temple Complex 262-3
 Devi Jagadamba Temple 642
 Duladeo Temple 644
 Durga Temple 906, 909-10
 Dwarkadish Temple 725
 Ekambareswara Temple 1038
 Elephanta Island 746
 Five Rathas 1033, 1035
 Galta 116
 Ganesh Ratha 1037
 Gangeswar Temple 711
 Gangotri Temple 434
 Ghantai Temple 643
 Gopal Mandir 667
 Govind Dev Temple 412
 Hadimba Mandir 315-16
 Hanseswari Temple 489
 Hanuman Temple (Anegundi) 906
 Hanuman Temple (Delhi) 77

Hanuman Temple (Khajuraho) 643
 Hanuman Temple (Sariska Tiger Reserve & National Park) 136
 Hanumangarhi 403
 Harsiddhi Mandir 666
 Hazarama Temple 901
 Hoysaleswara Temple 891
 Iskcon Temple 743
 Jagannath Temple 617
 Jagdish Temple 160
 Jakhu Hanuman Statue 292
 Janardhana Temple 957
 Javari Temple 643
 Jhandewalan Hanuman Temple 71
 Jor Bangla 490
 Kailasa Temple 785-6
 Kailasanatha Temple 1039
 Kala Rama Temple 776
 Kalighat Temple 464
 Kalikamata Temple 705
 Kamakhya Mandir 560
 Kamakshi Amman Temple 1038
 Kanak Bhavan 403-4
 Kanaka Durga Temple 935
 Kandariya-Mahadev Temple 642
 Kapaleeshwarar Temple 1015
 Karni Mata Temple 203
 Kashivishvanatha Temple 1054
 Kedarnath 435
 Kesava Deo Temple 410
 Keshava Temple 885
 Krishna Baram Temple Complex 411-12
 Krishna Temple 894-5
 Kumari Amman Temple 1074
 Kumbeshwara Temple 1054
 Lakshmi Narasmiha 901
 Lakshmana Temple 641
 Lakshmi Narayan Temple 633-4
 Lakshmi Narayan Temple Complex 340
 Lakshna Devi Temple 342
 Lakulisha Temple 705
 Lalguan Mahadev Temple 643
 Laxman Temple 685

Hindu temples *continued*

Laxmi Narayan Temple 189
 Lingaraj Mandir 597
 Mahabaleshvara Temple 896
 Mahadeva Temple 642
 Mahakaleshwar Mandir 665
 Mahalaxmi Mandir 806
 Mahishamardini Mandapa 1037
 Manimahesh Temple 342
 Manjunatha Temple 894
 Mansa Devi 422
 Masur temple complex 336
 Mata Temple 217
 Matangesvara Temple 642
 Meenakshi Amman Temple 1067-8, **1176-7**
 Mukteswar Mandir 598-9, **612**
 Murlidhar Krishna Temple 313
 Nageshwara Temple 1054
 Nanda Devi Temple 448
 Nataraja Temple 1052-3
 Nil Kanth Palace 671
 Old Rangji Temple 141
 Pagal Baba Temple 412
 Pap Mochani (Gayatri) Temple 141
 Parsurameswar Mandir 600
 Parsvanath Temple 643
 Parvati Temple 642
 Patalpuri Temple 407-8
 Pratapeswar Temple 642
 Raghunath Mandir 282
 Rajarani Mandir 600
 Ram Janam Bhumi 404
 Ram Raja Temple 633
 Ramakrishna Mission 70
 Ramanathaswamy Temple 1072
 Ramappa Temple 934-5
 Ramaswami Temple 1054
 Rasmancha 489
 Raya Gopura 1037
 rock-cut temple 952-3
 Rock Fort Temple 1061

Sachiya Mata Temple 187
 Sai Ka Angan Temple 79
 Sarangapani Temple 1054
 Savitri Mata Temple 141
 Shankaracharya Mandir 272
 Shantinath Temple 643
 Shore Temple 1033
 Shri Krishna Temple 1000
 Shri Murudeshwar Temple 897
 Shyamrai 489
 Siddeshwara Temple 934
 Simhachalam Temple 938
 Sri Chamundeswari Temple 875
 Sri Jambukeshwara Temple 1060-1
 Sri Kalahasteeswara Temple 1043
 Sri Manakula Vinayagar Temple 1044
 Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple 1060
 Sun Temple (Konark) 610-11, **612-13**
 Sun Temple (Modhera) 700
 Swayambhu Temple 934
 Swaminarayan Temple 692
 Swarg Niwas & Shri Trayanabakshwar 415
 Takhteshwar Temple 706
 Tamil Nadu 1043
 Temple of Amba Mata 719
 Temple of Gorakhnath 719
 Temple of Somnath 715
 Thirunelly Temple 1004
 Trimurti Cave Temple 1033
 Tripura Sundari Mandir 589
 Tripura Sundari Temple 313
 Undavalli Cave Temples 935
 Vadakkunathan Kshe-tram Temple 998
 Vaikunta Perumal Temple 1038
 Vamana Temple 643
 Varadaraja Perumal Temple 1038-9
 Varaha Mandapa 1037
 Vashisht Mandir 323

Venkateshwara Temple 942
 Venugopala Swamy Temple 884
 Vijayalaya Cholisvaram 1065
 Virupaksha temple (Hampi) 900, **11**
 Virupaksha temple (Pattadakal) 909
 Vishnu Mandir 313
 Vishvanath Temple 642
 Vishwanath Temple 381
 Vittala Temple 900
 Yamunotri Temple 432
 Hinduism 1145-8
 history 1121-37
 hitching 1213
 Hmuifang 587
 Holi 28, 29, 388, **7**
 holidays 1202-3
 homestays 1195
 Hooghly River 488-9
 Hosapete 907
 Hospet, *see* Hosapete
 houseboats 276
 Hubballi 907
 Hubli, *see* Hubballi
 Hundarman Broq 265
 Hunder 255
 Hyderabad 916-33, **917, 919, 920, 924, 928**
 accommodation 922-4
 activities 922
 drinking & nightlife 927-30
 entertainment 930-1
 festivals & events 922
 food 925-7
 sights 917-22
 tourist information 931-2
 tours 922
 travel to/from 932
 travel within 932-3

I
 Ichar 271
 immigration 1205-6, 1207
 Imphal 584-5
 Indore 660-5, **662-3**
 inner line permits 294, 299
 insurance 1198
 health 1218
 motorcycles 1215
 internet access 1099, 1198
 internet resources 1159, 1182, 1193, 1200
 Irrawaddy dolphins 614
 Islam 1148-9

Islamic architecture 1178-9
 Badshahi Ashurkhana 918
 Moula Ali Dargah 921
 Islamnagar 652
 Itanagar 575
 itineraries 32-8, **32-3, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38**

J
 Jabalpur 675-8, **676**
 Jagdalpur 685-6
 Jain architecture 1178
 Nandyavarta Mahal 532
 Parasnath Hill 533
 Udayagiri & Khandagiri Caves 599
 Jain temples 25
 Adinath Mandir 722
 Adinath Temple 644
 Bhandari Basti 891
 Bhandasra Temple 199
 Chandragupta Basti 891
 Chandranatha Basti 891
 Chandraprabhu 189
 Chaumukha Mandir 167
 Digambara Jain Temple 65
 Ellora Caves 787
 Hutheesingh Temple 691
 Mahavira Temple 187
 Parasnath 189
 Shantinath Mandir 722
 Sittannavasal 1065
 Soniji Ki Nasiyan (Red) Temple 139
 Temple of Mallinath 718
 Temple of Neminath 718
 Jainism 1151
 Jaipur 109-28, **112-13**
 Jaisalmer 14, 188-96, **190-1, 14**
 Jalgaon 790
 Jammu 282-5, **284**
 Jammagar 722-5, **723**
 Jarawa 1115-16
 Jari 306-8
 jewellery 1164-5
 Jeypore 620
 Jhansi 404
 Jharkhand 56, 532-4, **517**
 accommodation 516
 accommodation costs 522
 climate 516
 festivals & events 519
 food 516
 highlights 517
 history 518

Jhunjhunu 175-6
Jodhpur 18, 178-87,

180-1, 18

Jorhat 567-8
Joshimath 436-8
Junagadh 718-21, **719**

K

K3 road 283
Kachchh 727-35
Kakkabe 889
kalamkari 1019
kalarippayat 950, 985-6, 1172
Kalimpong 510-15, **512**
Kalipur 1114
Kalpa 299-300
Kambala 896
Kanchipuram 1037-40, **1038**
Kangra 335-6
Kannur 1007-9
Kanwaras 422
Kanyakumari 1073-6, **1075**
Kapurthala 223-4
Kargil 265-72
Kargil War 265
Karmapas 544
Karnataka 57, 856-913, **857**
accommodation 856
Central Karnataka 899-907
climate 856
festivals & events 858
food 856
highlights 857
history 858
Karnataka Coast 892-9
Northern Karnataka 907-13
permits 890
Southern Karnataka 873-92
Karsha 269-70
Kasar Devi 449
Kashmir 55, 229-85, 1136, **230-1**
accommodation 229
accommodation costs 257
climate 229
festivals & events 232
food 229, 280
highlights 230-1
history 271-2, 1136
Jammu & Southern Kashmir 282-5
Kashmir Valley 271-82
safe travel 273
Kasol 309

Kathakali 949-50, 985, 1000, 1172
Kattoor 969-70
Kausani 450-1
Kaza 347-9
Kedarnath 435-6
Keoladeo National Park 130-4
Kerala 58, 945-1010, **946, 13**
accommodation 945
accommodation costs 959
arts 1172
backwaters 13, 972-3, 1008
bus travel 1006
Central Kerala 983-1000
climate 945
drinking & nightlife 961
festivals & events 947, 998
floods 968, 997
food 945
highlights 946
homestays 969
Lakshadweep 1010
Northern Kerala 1000-10
Southern Kerala 947-72
Western Ghats 972-83
Khyber 344-5
khadi 1166
Khajuraho 14, 637-47, **640, 14**
accommodation 644-5
activities 644
drinking 645
festivals & events 644
food 645
history 637, 641
shopping 645-6
sights 641-4
tourist information 646
travel to/from 646-7
travel within 647
Khangchendzonga 551
Khonoma 582
Khotachiwadi 743
khurs 734
Khuri 197
Ki 350
Kibber 350
Kinnaur 296-301
Kishtwar 283
Kochi 983-97, **984, 988, 990, 993**
accommodation 986-9
activities 985
courses 985-6

drinking 989, 991-3
entertainment 993-4
festivals & events 986
food 989, 991-3
shopping 994
sights 983-5
tourist information 994-5
tours 986
travel to/from 995
travel within 996-7
Kodagu region 887-9
Kodaikanal 1077-82, **1078**
Kohima 579-82
Kollhapur 806-7
Kolkata 55, 453-84, **454, 458-9, 466-7, 474, 480**
accommodation 453, 466-70
accommodation costs 469
activities 465
architecture 478
climate 453
costs 469
courses 465
drinking & nightlife 476-7
entertainment 477-9
festivals & events 464, 471
food 453, 470-6
highlights 454
history 455-6
itineraries 455
safe travel 480
shopping 479-80
sights 456-65
tourist information 481
tours 466
travel to/from 482-3
travel within 483-4
walking tours 461, **461**
Kollam 962-4, **963**
Komic 351
Konark 610-11
Kondagaon 687
Konkan Coast 793
Kootiattam 949-50
Koraput 616-18
Kota 152-3
Kotagiri 1085-6
Kottayam 970-1
Kovalam (Kerala) 952-7, **954**
Kovalam (Tamil Nadu) 1032
Kozhikode 1000-3, **1001**
Kullu 311-12
Kuluk 557
Kumaon 418

Kumarakom 971-2
Kumbakonam 1054-6, **1056**
Kumbh Mela 1140
Kumbhalgarh 166-7
Kurseong 497-8
Kurukshetra 227-8
Kushinagar 395-7, **396**
Kutch 727-35
L
Lachung 547
Ladakh 12, 55, 232-71, **230-1, 12, 26**
accommodation 229
accommodation costs 257
climate 229, 232-3
festivals & events 232
food 229, 243
highlights 230-1
history 232
trekking 252-3
Lahaul 343-6
lakes
Berijam Lake 1077
Chandratal 347
Chilika Lake 611-15, **612-13**
Dal Lake 272
Khecheopalri (Kechu-peri) Lake 553
Lake Gangabal 280
Lake Pichola 159
Loktak Lake 585
Naini Lake 445
Nakki Lake 168-9
Nalsarovar Lake 701
Pangong Tso 257-8
Ranmal Lake 723
Roopkund Lake 437
Skeleton Lake 437
Sukhna Lake 207
Tso Moriri Loop 258-9
Ward's Lake 592
Lakshadweep 1010
Lakshman Jhula 415
Lamayuru 264
language classes 1198-9
Chennai 1019
Mussorie 431
Varanasi 385
languages 20, 1225-35
Langza 350
Le Corbusier 206-7
leatherwork 1165
legal matters 1199
Leh 233-47, **234-5, 240, 249-50**
Leh-Manali route 260

leopards, *see also* snow leopards
 Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve 681
 Betla (Palamau) National Park 534
 Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary 450
 Great Himalayan National Park 305
 Kanha Tiger Reserve 678
 Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary 167
 Ladakh 245
 Mt Abu 171
 Panna Tiger Reserve 647
 Rajaji Tiger Reserve 425
 Sanjay Gandhi National Park 769
 LGBTIQ+ travellers 765, 1144, 1199-200
 Lhalung 352-3
 life in India 1138-14
 lions 716, 717
 literacy rates 1119
 literature, *see* books
 Little Andaman 1114-16
 Little Rann of Kachchh 734-5
 local transport 1213-14
 Lonar 791
 Lonavla 798-9
 Long Island 1112-13
 Longwa 583
 Lord Mahavira 532
 Lothal 700
 Lucknow 398-403, **398**
 lunar calendar 30

M

Madgaon, *see* Margao
 Madhav National Park 630
 Madhya Pradesh 56, 627-84, **626**
 accommodation 635-6
 accommodation costs 635
 central Madhya Pradesh 648-60
 climate 625
 costs 635
 eastern Madhya Pradesh 675-84
 festivals & events 627
 food 625
 highlights 626

history 627
 northern Madhya Pradesh 627-48
 western Madhya Pradesh 660-75
 Madikeri 887-8
 Madras, *see* Chennai
 Madurai 1067-71, **1068**
 magazines 1201
 Mahabaleshwar 807-8
 Mahabalipuram, *see* Mamallapuram
 Maharashtra 57, 774-808, **775**
 accommodation 774
 accommodation costs 779
 climate 774
 festivals & events 776
 food 774
 northern Maharashtra 776-93
 southern Maharashtra 793-808
 Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 415
 Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park 1103
 Mahé 1000
 Maheshwar 673-4
 Majuli Island 568-9
 Malana 308-9
 malaria 1220
 Malpe 895
 Malvan 796-7
 Malvan Marine National Park 797
 Mamallapuram 1033-7, **1034**
 Man 257-8
 Mana Village 441-2
 Manali 314-22, **322**
 Mandakini River 405
 Mandawa 177-8
 Mandi 302
 Mandrem 840-1
 Mandu 668-73, **670**
 Mandvi 731
 Mangalore, *see* Mangaluru
 Mangaluru 892-4, **892**
 Mangnan 546
 Manikaran 309
 Manipur 583-5
 maps 1200
 Mapusa 821-2
 Marari 969-70
 Marble Rocks 678
 Margao 844-6
 marijuana 188, 306, 384, 449, 785, 1199, 1203
 Markha Valley 252-4

Masur 336
 matchmaking 1138
 Matha Amrithanandamayi Mission 964
 Matheran 797-8
 Matho 248
 Mathura 410-11, **410**
 Mayabunder 1116
 McLeod Ganj 326-33, **328**
 measures 1201
 Mechuka 577-9
 meditation 27, 45
 Bodhgaya 527
 Chennai 1019
 Delhi 80-1
 Jaipur 118
 Kovalam 953
 Leh 238
 Osho International Meditation Resort 801, 804
 planning 43-5
 Rishikesh 417-18
 Tiruvannamalai 1040
 Vipassana International Meditation Centre (Hyderabad) 922
 Meenakshi Amman Temple 1067-8, **1176-7**
 Meghalaya 590-4
 mehndi 1139
 Mehrangarh 179, **18**
 Melaghar 589
 Melukote 885
 Mercara, *see* Madikeri
 metros 1213
 Middle Andaman 1112-14
 miniature paintings 1174
 Mizoram 585-7
 mobile phones 20, 1099, 1204
 Modhera 700-1
 Mon 583
 monasteries 1152, **12**
 Auniati 569
 Bardan Gumpa 270
 Bhutanese Monastery 527
 Bhutia Busty Gumpa 502
 Buddhist caves 720
 Chemrey Monastery 251
 Dhankar Gumpa 352
 Diskit Gumpa 254-5
 Drikung Kagyu Gumpa 303
 Dubdi Gumpa 554
 Durpin Gumpa 511
 Enchey Gumpa 539
 Guru Sakya Gumpa 508

Gyuto Tantric Monastery 544
 Hemis Gumpa 249-51
 Khinmey Gumpa 573
 Ki Gumpa 350
 Lamayuru Gumpa 264
 Lingdum Gumpa 545
 Mak Dhog Gumpa 508
 Matho Monastery 248
 Mindrolling Monastery 427
 Muney Gumpa 270
 Namdroling Monastery 890-1
 Namgyal Monastery 527
 Ngadak Gumpa 549
 Old Rumtek Gumpa 545
 Palchen Choeling Monastery 550
 Pemayangtse Gumpa 551-2
 Phuktal Gumpa 270
 Rangdum Gumpa 267
 Resum Gumpa 557
 Rinchenpong Monastery 557
 Rumtek Gumpa 545
 Samaguri Satra 569
 Samten Choeling Gumpa 508
 Sanchi monasteries 655
 Sani Gumpa 269
 Shargol Gumpa 264
 Shashur Gumpa 344
 Shechen Monastery 527
 Sherabling Monastery 337
 Spituk Gumpa 236
 Stongdey Gumpa 270
 Tabo Gumpa 353
 Tangyud Gumpa 351
 Tashiding Gumpa 556
 Tashigang Monastery 301
 Tawang Gumpa 573
 Tergar Monastery 527
 Than 731
 Tharpa Choling Gumpa 511
 Thiksey Gumpa 249
 Thupsung Dhargyeling Gumpa 572
 Timishgan Khar 261
 Urgelling Gumpa 573
 Uttar Kamalabari 569
 Yiga Choeling Gumpa 508
 money 20, 1200-1
 money changers 1201
 Morjim 838

Morni Hills 213-14

mosques

Adina Masjid 494

Ahmed Shah's Mosque
696

Alamgir Mosque 384

Baradwari Mosque 494

Dilawar Khan's Mosque
669

Fatehpuri Masjid 70

Haji Ali Dargah 742

Hooghly Imambara 489

Jama Masjid (Agra) 364

Jama Masjid
(Ahmedabad) 696

Jama Masjid (Bhopal)
648

Jama Masjid (Delhi) 65,
1180

Jama Masjid (Fatehpur
Sikri) 373-6, **374-5**

Jama Masjid (Mandu)
669

Jama Masjid (Srinagar)
273

Jama Masjid (Vijapura)
911

Jami Masjid 705

Jamia Masjid 235

Jamid Masjid (Delhi)

Katra Masjid 411

Khanqah Shah-i-
Hamadan 273

Miskhal Masjid 1000

Nakhoda Mosque 462

Quwwat-ul-Islam Masjid
78

Rani Sipri's Mosque 696

Siddi Sayid's Mosque
696

Taj-ul-Masjid 648

Mother Teresa 457

Motihari 523

motorcycle travel 1214-16

Mt Abu 168-72, **170**

Mudumalai Tiger Reserve
1092-3

Mughal Road 282

Mumbai 14, 57, 736-73, **737**,
740, 744-5, 752-3,
756, 14

accommodation 736,
748-54

accommodation costs
749

activities 747

children, travel with 766

climate 736

courses 747

drinking & nightlife 761-4

entertainment 764

festivals & events 739

food 736, 754-61

highlights 737

history 738

itineraries 738

LGBTIQ+ travellers 765

safe travel 768

shopping 765-8

sights 739-46

tourist information 769

tours 747-8

travel to/from 770-1

travel within 771-3

walking tours 751, **751**

Munnar 978-82, **979**

Munsiyari 452

Murshidabad 492-3

Murudeshwar 897

Murud-Janjira 793-4

museums

Aircraft Museum 938

Alwar Museum 135

Anand Bhavan 407

Anokhi Museum of Hand
Printing 130

Anthropological Museum
1099

Anthropological Museum
(Jagdalpur) 685

Arakkal Museum 1007

Archaeological Museum
(Badami) 908-9

Archaeological Museum
(Hampi) 901

Archaeological Museum
(Khajuraho) 643

Archaeological Museum
(Konark) 611

Archaeological Museum
(Mathura) 410

Archaeological Museum
(Old Goa) 821

Archaeological Museum
(Sanchi) 656

Archaeological Museum
(Sarnath) 393-4

Archaeological Museum
(Vaishali) 522

Archaeological Museum
(Vijapura) 910

Archaeology Museum
(Thrissur) 998

Assam State Museum
560

Baa Ri Haveli 189

Bagore-ki-Haveli 160

Baroda Museum &
Picture Gallery 702-3

Bhuri Singh Museum 340

Bihar Museum 518

Calico Museum of
Textiles 691

Car Museum 894

Central Asian Museum
235

Central Museum (Indore)
661

Central Museum (Jaipur)
115

Chandigarh Architecture
Museum 207

Chhatrapati Shivaji
Maharaj Vastu

Sangrahalaya 741

Cholamandal Artists'
Village 1031-2

CIMA 464

City Museum 693

City Palace Museum 157-8

coffee museum 942

Crafts Museum 71

Crystal Gallery 158

DAG 742

Desert Cultural Centre &
Museum 190

Diu Museum 710

Don Bosco Museum of
Indigenous Cultures
590

Dr Bhau Daji Lad Mum-
bai City Museum 742

Dr Ramnath A Podar
Haveli Museum 173

Folk Art Museum 728

Forest Research Institute
Museum 427

Gandhi Memorial
Museum 1068

Gandhi Smriti 72-3

Ghandi Museum 695

Goa Chitra 846

Goa State Museum &
Secretariat Building
812

Government Museum
(Chennai) 1014-15

Government Museum
(Udaipur) 158

Government Museum &
Art Gallery 207

Hall of Fame 237

HEH The Nizam's
Museum 918

Himachal State Museum
292

Himalayan Mountaineer-
ing Institute 501

Himalayan Tibet
Museum 502

Indian Museum 456

Indira Gandhi Memorial
Museum 75

Indira Gandhi Rashtriya
Manav Sangrahalaya
875

Indo-Portuguese
Museum 984

International Roerich
Memorial Trust 313

Jawaharlal Nehru State
Museum 575

Jehangir Art Gallery 742

Joshi's Museum of
Miniature Railway 800

Kachchh Museum 728

Kerala Folklore
Museum 985

Khalsa Heritage
Complex 227

Kidzania 766

Krishnapuram Palace
Museum 964

Lahaul-Spiti Tribal
Museum 344

Lalibhai Dalpathbhai
Museum 692

Lepcha Heritage
Museum 511

Library of Tibetan Works
& Archives 327

Living & Learning Design
Centre (LLDC) Crafts
Museum 731

Lohargarh Museum 131

Lokayatan Folk Museum
692

Madurai Government
Museum 1068

Maharaja Sansar Chand
Museum 336

Manjusha Museum 894

Marble Palace 463

Maritime Museum 1053

Mattancherry Palace 985

Mehrangarh Museum 179

Morarka Haveli Museum
173

Munshi Aziz Bhat Serai
Museum 265

Museum of Habitat 941

Museum of History &
Heritage 947-8

Museum of Kangra
Art 324

Museum of Tribal Arts &
Artefacts 599

Naga Heritage Village 582

Nagarjunakonda
Museum 937

Namgyal Institute of
Tibetology 539

Napier Museum 949

museums *continued*

National Gallery of Modern Art 742
 National Gandhi Museum 74
 National Museum 71-2
 Natural History Museum 207
 Naulakha Museum 721
 NC Mehta Gallery 693
 Nehru Centenary Tribal Museum 922
 Nehru Memorial Museum 75
 Netaji Bhawan 458
 Odisha State Maritime Museum 621
 Partition Museum 215-16
 Patna Museum 518
 Prachina Cultural Centre & Museum 199
 Puducherry Museum 1043
 Pudukkottai Museum 1065
 Puthe Maliga Palace Museum 949
 Rail Museum 875
 Railway Museum 1061-2
 Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum 800
 Ram Katha Museum 404
 Rani Durgawati Museum 676
 Ratnagiri Museum 622
 RKK Memorial Museum 965
 Royal Vintage & Classic Car Collection 721
 Sacred Heart Natural Science Museum 1077
 Salar Jung Museum 918
 Samudrika Naval Marine Museum 1099
 San Thome Museum 846
 Scindia Museum 630-1
 Sea Shell Museum 712
 Sheesh Mahal 225-6
 Shree Chhatrapati Shahu Museum 806
 Shri Vishal Jain Museum 709
 Sri Krishna Museum 228
 Sri Pratap Singh Museum 275
 St Joseph's College Museum 1062

State Museum (Bhopal) 648
 State Museum (Bhubaneswar) 600
 State Museum (Hyderabad) 918-19
 State Museum (Kohima) 580
 State Museum (Ranchi) 532
 Submarine Museum 938
 Sudha Cars Museum 923
 Sullivan Memorial 1086
 Swami Vivekananda Wandering Monk Exhibition 1074
 Tagore's House 463
 Taj Museum 357
 Tea Museum 978
 Thar Heritage Museum 191
 Tibet Museum 327
 Toilet Garden 693
 Town Hall 460
 Tribal Heritage Museum 452
 Tribal Museum 648
 Uttarayan Complex 491
 Vechaar Utensil Museum 693
 Vintage & Classic Car Collection 160
 Vivekananda House 1015
 Wayanad Heritage Museum 1004
 music 931, 1120, 1171-3
 musical instruments 1165-6
 Mussoorie 429-32, **430-1**
 Mysore, *see* Mysuru
 Mysuru 873-84, **878-9**
 accommodation 879-81
 activities 875
 courses 875
 drinking & nightlife 882
 festivals & events 879
 history 874
 shopping 882-3
 sights 874-5
 tourist information 883
 tours 879
 travel to/from 883-4
 travel within 884
 Mysuru Palace 874-5, 876-7, **876-7**

N

Nagaland 579-83
 Nagarhole National Park 886-7

Nagarjunakonda 937-8
 Naggar 312-14
 Nagpur 790-1
 Nainital 445-7, **446-7**
 Nako 300-2
 Nalanda 531-2
 Namchi 549-50
 Nandi Hills 874
 Naranag 280-1
 Nashik 776-80, **777**
 national parks 1185, *see also* tiger reserves
 Bandhavgarh National Park 681-2, **13**
 Bandipur National Park 885-6
 Betla (Palamau) National Park 534
 Corbett Tiger Reserve 442-5
 Desert National Park 197
 Eravikulam National Park 983
 Gir National Park & Wildlife Sanctuary 716-18
 Govind Wildlife Sanctuary & National Park 440
 Great Himalayan National Park 304, 305
 Hemis National Park 252
 Jaldapara National Park 515
 Kanger Valley National Park 687
 Kaziranga National Park 566
 Keoladeo National Park 130-4
 Madhav National Park 630
 Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park 1103
 Malvan Marine National Park 797
 Manas National Park 564
 Nagarhole National Park 886-7, 1004
 Nameri National Park 565-6
 Narara Marine National Park 725
 Ranthambhore National Park 145-8
 Sanjay Gandhi National Park 769
 Sariska Tiger Reserve & National Park 136-7
 Singalila National Park 508

Valley of Flowers National Park 438-40
 Velavadar Blackbuck National Park 708
 Nawalgarh 173-5
 Neil Island, *see* Shaheed Dweep
 Nepal 391
 Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Dweep 1102
 New Jalpaiguri 494-7
 newspapers 1201
 Ney 261
 Nicobarese 1115-16
 Nilgiri Hills 1080, **1086**
 Nimmu 259-60
 Norbulingka Institute 334
 North Paravur 997-8
 Northeast States 17, 24, 56, 558-94, **559**
 accommodation 558
 accommodation costs 567
 climate 558
 costs 567
 festivals & events 564
 food 558
 highlights 559
 permits 574
 safe travel 568
 tours 565
 Nubra Valley 254-7

O

Odisha 56, 595-624, **596**
 accommodation 595
 accommodation costs 608
 Bhubaneswar 597-605
 festivals & events 600
 food 595
 health 597
 highlights 596
 history 597
 northeastern Odisha 620-4
 northern Odisha 620-4
 safe travel 597
 southeastern Odisha 605-16
 southwestern Odisha 616-20
 tourist information 597
 travel to/from 597
 tribal groups 617
 olive ridley turtles 622
 Omkareshwar 674-5
 Onam 28, 30
 Onge 1115-16

Ooty, see
Udhagamandalam
opening hours 21, 1201-2
Orchha 632-7, **634**
orchids 511
Osian 187-8

P

paan 1156
Pachmarhi 657-60, **658**
Padum 268-9
Pahalgam 279-80
painting 1173-4
Pakistan, relations with
1120, 1135-6
palaces 25
Aga Khan Palace 800
Aina Mahal 727
Amar Mahal 283-4
Baz Bahadur's Palace 671
Bundi Palace 148
Chitrasala 148-9
Chowmahalla Palace
917-18
City Palace (Alwar) 134
City Palace (Jaipur) 113-15
City Palace (Kota) 152
City Palace (Udaipur) 157
Daria Daulat Bagh 884-5
Fatehpur Sikri Palace 373
Fort Palace Museum 188-9
Gajlaxmi Palace 621
Garh Dhenkanal Palace
621
Gauhar Mahal 648
Hazarduari 492
Hindola Mahal 669
Itachuna Rajbari 490
Jaganmohan Palace 875
Jahaz Mahal 669
Jai Vilas Palace 630-1
Jal Mahal 669
Jehangir Maha 633
Kareng Ghar 570
Lal Bagh Palace 661
Laxmi Vilas Palace 702
Leh Palace 233
Maheshwar Palace 673
Mubarak Mandi 283
Mysuru Palace 874-5,
876-7, **876-7**
Neermahal 589
Padam Palace 297
Padmanabhapuram
Palace 953, 1073
Prag Mahal 728
Raj Mahal 633
Rajbari Bawal 490
Rajwada 661
Rani Mahal 728
Ranjit Villas Palace 726
Royal Oasis 726
Royal Palace 1057-8
Sajjan Garh 160
Sharad Baug Palace 728
Stok Palace 248
Suraj Mahal's Palace 134
Talat Ghar palace 570
Tirumalai Nayak Palace
1068
Ujjayanta Palace 587
Umaid Bhawan Palace
181-2
Palampet 934-5
Palampur 336-7
Palitana 708-9
Paleom 849-54, **850-1**
Panaji 812-20, **814, 818-19**
Pandia 493-4
Pangi Valley 345-6
Pangong Tso 254, 256, 257-8
Panjim, see Panaji
Parambikulam Tiger
Reserve 981
Parasnath Hill 533
parks & gardens
Botanical Gardens
(Kolkata) 462
Botanical Gardens
(Srinagar) 273
Botanical Gardens
(Udhagamandalam)
1087
Bougainvillea Garden
206
Brindavan Gardens 884
Buddha Smriti Park
518-19
Cheshmashahi Garden
272
Horticultural Gardens
465
Khusru Bagh 407
Lodi Garden 77
Maidan 457
Mehrauli Archaeological
Park 78-9
Mehtab Bagh 363
Mughal Gardens 272-3
Nek Chand Rock Garden
206
Osho Teerth
Gardens 801
Pari Mahal 272
Phool Bagh 633
Pinjore Gardens 214
Rabindra Sarovar 464
Ram Bagh 217
Ram Niwas Bagh 115

Rao Jodha Desert Rock
Park 180
Rose Garden
(Chandigarh) 206
Rose Garden (Ooty) 1087
Shalimar Bagh 272
Sunder Nursery 77
Terraced Garden 206
Theosophical Society
1018-19
Tulip Garden 273
Parsi cafes 755
Parsis 755
Parvati Valley 306-11, **307**
Pasighat 578-9
passports 1207
Patan 701-2
Pathankot 223
Patiala 225-6
Patna 518-22, **520**
Patnem 854-5
Pattadakal 909
Pattan Valley 345-6
Pavagadh 705-6
Pelling 551-3, **552**
Periyar Tiger Reserve
973-8, **975**
permits
Andaman Islands 1097-8
Bylakuppe 890
Gurajat alcohol permits
702
inner line permits 294,
299, 347
Ladakh 256
Mayabunder 1116
Northeast States 574
Rohtang La permits 345
Sikkim 537-8
photography 1191, 1202
Phyang 259
pilgrimages 1140-1
Pin Valley 351-2
Pipli 605
Pithoragarh 451
planning, see also
accommodation costs
budgeting 20-1, 96
calendar of events 28-31
children, travel with 51-3
climate 20, 28
first-time visitors 22-3
India basics 20-1
India's regions 54-8
internet resources 21
itineraries 32-8, **34, 35,**
36, 37, 38
off the beaten track
32-3
repeat visitors 24
travel seasons 20, 28
poaching 566
police 1199
politics 1118-12
Ponda 813
Pondicherry, see
Puducherry
Ponnumthuruthu (Golden)
Island 958
population 1118-12, 1138-14
Porbandar 725
Port Blair 1099-10, **1100**
postal services 1202
Prayagraj 405-10, **406**
Project Tiger 1183
Protected Area Permits
Bylakuppe 890
Ladakh 256
Northeast States 574
public holidays 1202-3
public transport 1193
Puducherry 17, 1042-51,
1046, 17
Pune 800-5, **802**
Punjab 54, 214-27, **205**
accommodation 204
accommodation costs
222
climate 204
festivals & events 213
food 204
highlights 205
Puri 605-10, **606-7**
Pushkar 31, 117, 140-5,
142, 26
Q
Qawwalia 931
Quilon, see Kollam
Qutab Minar complex 78, **17**
R
radio 1201
Raghurajpur 610
Raipur 684-5
Rajaji Tiger Reserve 425-6
Rajasthan 54, 108-203,
110-11
accommodation 108
accommodation costs
119
climate 108
eastern Rajasthan
109-48
festivals & events 117
food 108
highlights 110-11
history 109

Rajasthan *continued*
 northern Rajasthan
 (Shekhawati) 172-8
 southern Rajasthan
 148-72
 Western Rajasthan
 178-203

Rajgir 529-31
 Rajkot 725-7
 Ramayana 1147-8
 Rambha 615
 Rameswaram 1071-3
 Rampur 296-7
 Ramtek 792-3
 Ranakpur 167-8
 Ranchi 532-4
 Rangat 1112
 Rangdum 267
rangolis 1174
 Rani Abbakka 898
 Ranthambhore National
 Park 145-8, **146**
 Ravangla 550-1
 Raxaul 523-4
 Rayagada 619-20
 Red Fort 64-7, **66-7**
 Reiek 587
 Rekong Peo 299
 religion 931, 1119, 1145-52
 Restricted Area Permits
 Andaman Islands 1097-8
 far north Sikkim 538
 Mayabunder 1116
 Rewalsar 303-4
 rhinos 515, 564, 566, 1181,
 1183
 Rinchenpong 557
 Rishikesh 18, 415-22,
416, 18
 Rohtang La 260, 344, 345
 Ross Island 1113, *see* Netaji
 Subhas Chandra Bose
 Dweep
 Rumtek 545-6

S

Sabarimala 978
 sacred animals 1148
 sacred number 1146
 sacred texts 1147-8
 safe travel 1203
 altitude sickness 233
 Andaman Islands 1097
 bhang lassis 1203
 Bihar 531

Delhi 102-3
 Diu 712
 drugs 833, 1190, 1199
 food 23
 Hampi 906
 Kashmir 273
 Kerala floods 968
 Kolkata 480
 Kovalam 953
 Mumbai 768
 Northeast States 568
 Parvati Valley 308
 Pushkar 609
 Puri 609
 sadhus 421
 sandflies 1098
 scams 23, 1190-1
 solo travellers 1193
 theft 833
 transport 1193
 water 529, 1221
 wildlife 1182
 women travellers 103,
 1192-3

Salawas 187
 Sam Sand Dunes 197
 Sanchi 652-7, **654**
 Sangam 405-7
 Sangla 298
 Sangla Valley 298-9
 Sankaram 941
 Sarahan 297
 saris 1167-8
 Sariska Tiger Reserve &
 National Park 136-7
 Sarnath 393-4, **393**
 Saspol 262
 Satapada 614
satras 569
 Saurashtra 706-27
 scams 23, 1190-1
 Sentinelese 1115-16
 Serampore 489
 Sevagram 793
 Shaheed Dweep 1109-11
 Sham 261-2
 Shantiniketan 490-2
 shared jeeps 1216
 Shekhawati region 172-8
 Shey 248-9
 Shillong 590-3, **591**
 Shimla 287-96, **290-1**
 Shivneri 806
 Shompen 1115-16
 shopping 1163-70
 Sikh temples 25
 Golden Temple 16, 215,
16, 1178-9

Gurdwara Bangla
 Sahib 71
 Guru Nanak Jhira Sahib
 913
 Hem Kund 438-9
 Kesgarh Sahib 227
 Sikhism 1149-15
 Sikkim 56, 535-57, **536**
 accommodation 535
 accommodation costs
 549
 activities 537
 border crossings 538
 climate 535
 east Sikkim 538-46
 far north Sikkim 547-9
 festivals & events 539
 food 535, 543
 highlights 536
 history 537
 north Sikkim 546-8
 permits 537-8
 south Sikkim 548-51
 travel to/from 538
 travel within 538
 west Sikkim 551-7
 Siliguri 494-7
 Silk Road 256
 Singalila Ridge 508-10
 Singhasini 187
 Sinhadag 805-6
 Sirpur 685
 Sivasagar 569-70
 Smith Island 1113
 smoking 1199, 1203
 snakes 1183
 snow leopards 245
 Govind Wildlife
 Sanctuary & National
 Park 440
 Great Himalayan
 National Park 305
 Kaza 349
 Sohra 593-4
 solo travellers 1193
 Somnath 714-16
 Somnathpur 885
 Sonamarg 281-2
 Sonauli 397
 Spangmik 257
 spice farms 813, 849, 974
 spices 1154, **2**
 Spiti 343-4, 346-54
 sport 1143-4
 Sravanabelagola 891-2
 Srinagar 272-9, **274**
 Srirangapatna 884-5
 Srirangapatnam,
see Srirangapatna

Stakna Gumpa 244
 Stok 248
 Sufi shrines
 Dargah Hazrat Shah
 Khamosh 931
 Dargah Yousufain
 Sharifain 931
 Sufism 931
 Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary
 228
 Sunauli 397
 Sundarbans Tiger Reserve
 487-8
 Surat 706
 Suru Valley 266-71
 Swaraj Dweep 1104-9, 1110,
1106
 Swarg Ashram 417
 synagogues
 BethEl Synagogue 460
 Chennamangalam
 Synagogue 998
 Keneseth Eliyahoo
 Synagogue 742
 Maghen David
 Synagogue 460
 Neveh Shalom
 Synagogue 460
 Pardesti Synagogue 985

T

tabla classes 879
 Tabo 353-4
 Tadoba-Andhari Tiger
 Reserve 792
 Taj Mahal 10, 55, 357,
 360, 362, **365, 2, 10,**
359-60
 Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai
 739-40
 Takthog 251-2
 Talpona 854
 Tamil language 1229-30
 Tamil Nadu 58, 1011-94,
1012
 accommodation 1011
 accommodation costs
 1036
 central Tamil Nadu
 1052-64
 Chennai 1013-31
 climate 1011
 festivals & events 1014
 food 1011
 highlights 1012
 Hindu temples 1043
 history 1013
 northern Tamil Nadu
 1031-52
 southern Tamil Nadu
 1064-76

surfing 1032
 Western Ghats 1076-94
 Tanjore, *see* Thanjavur
 Tashiding 556-7
 Tawang Valley 572-5
 taxis 1213-14, 1193, *see also*
car-sharing services
 tea 505, **13**
 Tegar 256-7
 Telangana 57, 916-35, **915**
accommodation 914
accommodation costs
 936 *climate* 914
festivals & events 916
food 914
highlights 915
history 916
 telephone services 20,
 1099, 1203-4
 temples 25, *see also* Bud-
 dhist temples, Hindu
 temples, Jain temples,
 Sikh temples
 Bahai House of
 Worship 75
 Chola temples 1055
 tempos 1214
 textiles 1167-8
 Tezpur 565
 Thangassery 962
thangkas 1167
 Thanjavur 1056-60, **1058**
 Tharangambadi 1053-4
 Thattekkad Bird
 Sanctuary 982
theyyam 1007, 1172
 Thiksey 249
 Thiruvananthapuram
 947-52, **948**
 Thotlakonda 941
 Thrissur 998-1000, **999**
 Tia 261
 Tibetan exiles 332
 Tibetan medicine 327
 Tibetan refugees 65, 502,
 890
 tiger reserves
 Anamalai Tiger
 Reserve 1093-4
 Bandhavgarh Tiger
 Reserve 681
 Corbett Tiger
 Reserve 442-5
 Kanha Tiger Reserve
 678-81
 Kaziranga National
 Park 566
 Mudumalai Tiger
 Reserve 1092-3
 Panna Tiger Reserve
 647-8

Parambikulam Tiger
 Reserve 981
 Pench Tiger Reserve
 682-4
 Periyar Tiger Reserve
 973-8
 Rajaji Tiger Reserve
 425-6
 Ranthambore
 National Park 145-8
 Sariska Tiger Reserve &
 National Park 136-7
 Satkosia Tiger
 Sanctuary 620
 Sundarbans Tiger
 Reserve 487-8
 Tadoba-Andhari Tiger
 Reserve 792
 tigers 13, 1181-2, 1183, **13**
time 20, 1204
 tipping 23, 1201
 Tirthan Valley 304-6
 Tiruchirappalli 1060-4,
1061, 1064
 Tirumala 942-4
 Tirupati 942-4
 Tiruvannamalai 1040-2
 toilets 1204-5
 tombs
 Akbar's Mausoleum 363
 Badshah Tomb 273
 Bara Imambara 399
 Chota Imambara
 399-400
 Dargah of Khwaja Muin-
 ud-din Chishti 137-8
 Eklakhi Mausoleum 494
 Golgumbaz 910
 Gumbaz 885
 Hazrat Nizam-ud-din
 Dargah 77
 Hoshang Shah's Tomb
 669-70
 Humayun's Tomb 76
 Ibrahim Rouza 910
 Jamali's tomb 78
 Mahabat Maqbara 720
 Mausoleum of Ahmed
 Shah 696
 Paigah Tombs 921
 Qutb Shahi Tombs 921
 Ram Rai Darbar 427
 Safdarjang's Tomb 78
 St Thomas 1018
 Tomb of Tansen 631
 Vazir's Mausoleum 720
 Top Station 982
 tourist information 1205
 tours 1217
 touts 103, *see also* safe
 travel

train travel 16, 24, 39-40,
 1216-17, **16**
 Darjeeling Himalayan
 Railway 507
 Kalka-Shimla Railway
 295
 Tranquebar, *see*
 Tharangambadi
 transport 1207-17
 children, travel with 53
 language 1228, 1230
 safe travel 1193
 scams 1191
 solo travellers 1193
 travel permits 1206
 travel seasons 42
 travel to/from India 1207-10
 travel within India 21, 1210-17
 traveller hubs 27
 traveller's diarrhoea 1220-1
 trekking 41-2
 tribal peoples 17, 1142-3,
17, 613
 Andaman Islands 1115-16
 Arunchal Pradesh 573
 Karen 1116
 Naga 579
 Nilgiri Hills 1080
 Northeast States 582
 religion 1147
 Toda 1080
 Trichur, *see* Thrissur
 Tichy, *see* Tiruchirappalli
 Tripura 587-90
 Trivandrum, *see*
 Thiruvananthapuram
 Tso Moriri 256, 258-9
 turtle-watching 1114
 Turtuk 255-6
 TV 1201

U

Udaigiri Cave Shrines 656
 Udaipur (Rajasthan) 19,
 156-66, **158-9, 19**
accommodation 161-3
activities 160-1
courses 160-1
drinking 164
entertainment 164
food 163-4
history 157
shopping 164
sights 157-60
tourist information 165
tours 161
travel to/from 165-6
travel within 166
 Udaipur (Tripura) 589-90

Udhagamandalam 1087-92,
1088-9, 19
 Udupi 894-5
 Ujjain 665-8, **666-7**
 Unakoti 590
 Upper Indus 256
 Uttar Pradesh 55, 377-412,
378-9
accommodation 377
accommodation costs
 400
climate 377
costs 400
festivals & events 388
food 377, 401
highlights 378-9
history 380
 Uttarakhand 55, 413-52,
414
accommodation 413
accommodation costs
 419
climate 413, 415
costs 419
festivals & events 420
food 413
highlights 414
history 415
tourist information 415
travel within 415
 Uttarkashi 433-4

V

vacations 1202-3
 vaccinations 1218-19
 Vadodra 702-5, **703**
 Vagator 834-8, **836**
 Vaishali 522
 Valley of Flowers National
 Park 438-40
 Vanakbara 711
 Varanasi 15, 380-93,
382, 386
accommodation 385,
 387-9
activities 384-5
courses 385
drinking 390
entertainment 390-1
etiquette 384
festivals & events 388
food 389-90
ghats 381, 383-4
history 380-1
scams 384
shopping 390-1
sights 381, 383-4
tourist information 391
tours 385

Varanasi *continued*
 transport to Kathmandu 391
 travel to/from 392
 travel within 392-3
 Varkala 957-62, **958**
 Vashisht 322-4, **322**
 vegetarians & vegans 1158
 Veraval 715
 Vijapura 910-13, **910**
 Vijayawada 935-6
 vikrams 1214
 Visakhapatnam 938-41
 visas 20, 1205-6
 volunteering 46-50
 Vrindavan 411-12, **412**

W
 Wakha-Mulbekh Valley 264-5
 walking tours
 Jaipur 120, **120**
 Kolkata 461, **461**
 Mumbai 751, **751**
 Patiala 225
 Wandoor 1103-4
 Wankaner 726
 Warangal 934
 water 1221
 Wayanad region 1003-6, **1003**
 Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary 1003-4
 weather 20, 28-31, 42
 weights 1201
 West Bengal 56, 485-515, **486**
 accommodation 485
 accommodation 494
 climate 485
 festivals & events 493

food 473, 485
 Ganges Delta 487-94
 highlights 486
 history 487
 West Bengal Hills 494-515
 White Desert 731
 wild asses 734
 wildlife 1181-5, *see also individual animals*
 wildlife safaris
 Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve 681
 Betla (Palamau) National Park 534
 Devalia Safari Park 716
 Gir National Park & Wildlife Sanctuary 716-17
 Jabalpur 676
 Jaipur 117
 Kanha Tiger Reserve 678
 Kaziranga National Park 566
 Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary 167
 Manas National Park 564
 Panna Tiger Reserve 647
 Pench Tiger Reserve 683
 Ranthambhore National Park 146
 Sariska Tiger Reserve & National Park 137
 wildlife sanctuaries & reserves 13, 27, 1184, 1185, *see also tiger reserves, wildlife safaris*
 Agra Bear Rescue Facility 370
 Anamalai Tiger Reserve 1093-4
 Arunachala Animal Sanctuary 1040-1

Bandipur National Park 885-6
 Barda Wildlife Sanctuary 725
 Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary 623-4
 Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary 450
 Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary 983
 Dandeli 908
 Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary 624
 Elephant Conservation Centre 370
 Eravikulam National Park 983
 Fudam Bird Sanctuary 712
 Gir National Park & Wildlife Sanctuary 716-18
 Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary 725
 Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary 971
 Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary 167
 Mt Abu Wildlife Sanctuary 169
 Mudumalai Tiger Reserve 1092-3
 Nagarhole National Park 886-7
 Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary 701
 Parambikulam Tiger Reserve 981
 Periyar Tiger Reserve 973-8
 Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary 563-4
 Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary 885

Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary 228
 Thattekkad Bird Sanctuary 982
 Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary 1035
 Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary 1003-4
 Wild Ass Sanctuary 734
 wine 1160
 wineries
 Nandi Hills 874
 Nashik 778
 wolves 167
 women in India 1141-2
 women travellers 1192-3
 Delhi 103
 Diu 712
 safety 103
 woodcarving 1169
 work 1206
 workshops
 Athangudi Palace Tiles 1065
 shawl-making 313
 Sri Mahalakshmi Handloom Weaving Centre 1065

Y
 Yamunotri 432
 Yapola Valley 263-4
 yoga 27, 43-4, **18**
 Yuksom 554-5
 Yumthang 547-8

Z
 Zangla 720
 Zanskar 259-60, 267-71
 Zero Point 548
 Ziro Valley 575-7
 Zoroastrianism 1152

Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping
- Hut/Shelter

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro/MRT/MTR station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Skytrain/Subway station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



Trent Holden

Uttarakhand A Geelong-based writer, located just outside Melbourne, Trent has worked for Lonely Planet since 2005. He's covered 30-plus guidebooks across Asia, Africa and Australia. With a penchant for megacities, Trent's in his element when assigned to cover a nation's capital – the more chaotic the better – to unearth cool bars, art, street food and underground subculture. On the flipside he also writes books to idyllic tropical islands across Asia, in between going on safari to national parks in Africa and the subcontinent. When not travelling, Trent works as a freelance editor, reviewer and spending all his money catching live gigs. You can catch him on Twitter @hombreholden.



Bradley Mayhew

Kashmir & Ladakh; Agra & the Taj Mahal; Uttar Pradesh Bradley has been writing guidebooks for 20 years now. He started travelling while studying Chinese at Oxford University, and has since focused his expertise on China, Tibet, the Himalaya and Central Asia. He is the cowriter of Lonely Planet guides *Tibet*, *Nepal*, *Trekking in the Nepal Himalaya*, *Bhutan*, *Central Asia* and many others. Bradley has also fronted two TV series for Arte and SWR, one retracing the route of Marco Polo via Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia and China, and the other trekking Europe's 10 most scenic long-distance trails. Bradley has also worked on guides to Mongolia, Jordan, Morocco, India and the Indian Himalaya; written for Rough Guides; contributed chapters to *Silk Road: Monks, Warriors & Merchants* and is a cowriter of Insight Guide's *Silk Road*.



Kevin Raub

Mumbai; Maharashtra Atlanta native Kevin started his career as a music journalist in New York, until he ditched the rock 'n' roll lifestyle for travel writing. He has since written more than 70 Lonely Planet guides, focused mainly on Brazil, Chile, Colombia, USA, India, the Caribbean and Portugal. Kevin also contributes to a variety of travel magazines in both the USA and UK. Along the way, the self-confessed hophead is in constant search of wildly high IBUs in local beers, and continues

pounding the world's pavements with one goal in mind: membership in the Travelers' Century Club before the age of 50. His country count currently stands at 93. Follow him on Twitter and Instagram @RaubOnTheRoad.



Sarina Singh

After finishing her business degree Sarina bought a one-way ticket to India, where she met an aspiring photographer who requested her to write a paragraph for one of his photos in the hope he could get it published. The magazine asked Singh to turn her 100 word 'caption' into a 3000 word feature, and so began her accidental writing career. After five years in India she returned to her home town of Melbourne to pursue postgraduate studies at one of Australia's top journalism universities.

Sarina has written for 50 Lonely Planet titles, including more than 10 editions of *India*; four editions of *Rajasthan* and three editions of *South India*. She has also written for dozens of other international publications such as UK's *Sunday Times* and USA's *National Geographic Traveler*. Find her on Twitter @sarina_singh and www.sarinasingh.com. Sarina wrote the Plan Your Trip, Understand and Survival Guide sections.



Iain Stewart

Karnataka; Telangana & Andhra Pradesh Iain trained as journalist in the 1990s and then worked as a news reporter and a restaurant critic in London. He started writing travel guides in 1997 and has since penned more than 60 books for destinations as diverse as Ibiza and Cambodia. Iain's contributed to Lonely Planet titles including *Mexico*, *Indonesia*, *Central America*, *Croatia*, *Vietnam*, *Bali & Lombok* and *South-East Asia*. He also writes regularly for the *Independent*, *Observer* and

Daily Telegraph and tweets at @iaintravel. He'll consider working anywhere there's a palm tree or two and a beach of a generally sandy persuasion. Iain lives in Brighton (UK) within firing range of the city's wonderful south-facing horizon.

**Daniel McCrohan**

Delhi; Punjab & Haryana Daniel is a widely published Asia-travel expert who has written or cowritten more than 40 guidebooks for both Lonely Planet and Trailblazer. He specialises in China and India, but has also written books on Mongolia, Russia, Tibet and Bangladesh, plus numerous British walking guides. Daniel has been a guest speaker at international travel shows, and was a cohost on the television travel series *Best in China*. He speaks Chinese, adores tea and

cycles pretty much everywhere. Find out what he's up to on Twitter @danielmccrohan, or at danielmccrohan.com.

**Isabella Noble**

Kerala; Andaman Islands English-Australian on paper but Spanish at heart, Isabella has been wandering the globe since her first round-the-world trip as a one-year-old. Having grown up in a whitewashed Andalusian village, she is a Spain specialist travel journalist, but also writes extensively about India, Thailand, the UK and beyond for Lonely Planet, the Daily Telegraph and others. Isabella has cowritten Lonely Planet guides to Spain and Andalucía, and is a *Daily Telegraph* Spain expert. She

has also contributed to Lonely Planet *India*, *South India*, *Thailand*, *Thailand's Islands & Beaches*, *Southeast Asia on a Shoestring* and *Great Britain*, and written *Pocket Phuket*. Find Isabella on Twitter and Instagram @isabellamnoble.

**John Noble**

West Bengal; Northeast States John has been travelling for Lonely Planet since the 1980s. The number of LP titles he's written is well into three figures, on numerous countries scattered across the globe. He's still as excited as ever about heading out to unfamiliar destinations, especially off-the-beaten-track ones. Above all, he loves mountains, from the Pyrenees to the Himalaya. See his pics on Instagram: @johnnoble11.

**Michael Benanav**

Tamil Nadu Michael is a veteran traveler, writer and photographer who loves exploring places far from beaten tourist trails. He's written three non-fiction books, including *Men Of Salt: Crossing the Sahara on the Caravan of White Gold* – the true story of a 1000-mile journey with one of the world's last working camel caravans – and *Himalaya Bound: One Family's Quest to Save Their Animals & an Ancient Way of Life*, which follows a tribe of nomadic water buffalo herders in

the Indian Himalayas. He also founded Traditional Cultures Project, which documents endangered cultures around the world. When not off travelling, he can often be found hiking in the hills behind his home in northern New Mexico. To see some of his work, visit www.michaelbenanav.com.

**Stuart Butler**

Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh; Gujarat & Diu Stuart has been writing for Lonely Planet for a decade and during this time he's come eye to eye with gorillas in the Congolese jungles, met a man with horns on his head who could lie in fire, huffed and puffed over snow-bound Himalayan mountain passes, interviewed a king who could turn into a tree, and had his fortune told by a parrot. Oh, and he's met more than his fair share of self-proclaimed gods. He also works as a photographer and

was a finalist in both the 2015 and 2016 Travel Photographer of the Year Awards. When not on the road for Lonely Planet he lives on the beautiful beaches of Southwest France with his wife and two young children. His website is www.stuartbutlerjournalist.com.

**Mark Elliott**

Himachal Pradesh; Sikkim Mark Elliott had already lived and worked on five continents when, in the pre-Internet dark ages, he started writing travel guides. He has since written (or cowritten) around 60 books including dozens for Lonely Planet. He also acts as a travel consultant, occasional tour leader, video presenter, speaker, interviewer and blues harmonicist. He's @Markbek on Twitter or www.instagram.com/markbekaz.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Joe Bindloss

Joe first got the travel bug on a grand tour of Asia in the early 1990s, and he's been roaming around its temples and paddy-fields ever since on dozens of assignments for Lonely Planet and other publishers, covering everywhere from Myanmar and Thailand to India and Nepal. When not on the road, Joe works as Lonely Planet's Destination Editor for the Indian Subcontinent. Joe wrote the Plan Your Trip section.



Lindsay Brown

Rajasthan Lindsay started travelling as a young bushwalker exploring the Blue Mountains west of Sydney. Then as a marine biologist he dived the coastal and island waters of southeastern Australia. He continued travelling whenever he could while employed at Lonely Planet as an editor and publishing manager. On becoming a freelance writer and photographer he has cowritten more than 35 Lonely Planet guides to Australia, Bhutan, India, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea.



Paul Harding

Goa As a writer and photographer, Paul has been travelling the globe for the best part of two decades, with an interest in remote and offbeat places, islands and cultures. He's an author and contributor to more than 50 Lonely Planet guides to countries and regions as diverse as India, Belize, Vanuatu, Iran, Indonesia, New Zealand, Iceland, Finland, Philippines and – his home patch – Australia. He's on twitter @phtravel and at paulharding.contently.com.



Anirban Mahapatra

Kolkata; Bihar & Jharkhand; Odisha Anirban is a travel writer, photographer and filmmaker who has written multiple editions of Lonely Planet's bestselling *India* guidebook, as well as several regional handbooks. He has written and curated Lonely Planet guidebooks or Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Bhutan, as well as design content models and holding writer workshops for Lonely Planet. He has also made videos and documentaries for international television networks, corporates

and ministries under the Government of India. When not travelling the world, he lives in Kolkata and Bangkok, where he reads up on Buddhism, listens to the blues and plans his next adventure.

OVER MORE
PAGE WRITERS

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